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The Betwixt and Between: Peter Pan as a Trickster Figure

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I declare that I have worked on this thesis independently,

using only the primary and secondary sources listed in the bibliography.

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Eva Valentová

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Introduction

The topic of the present thesis may look somewhat unconventional at first sight. The subject of the research are two culturally significant figures: Peter Pan, the rebellious boy who refuses to grow up and plays hide-and-seek with the stars, trying to blow them out when they are not looking, has become an iconic character of not only children's literature, but British culture in general. The trickster, on the other hand, is not usually associated with British culture at all. His place (at least in the eyes of scholars) is mainly in the field of Native American and African mythology. Therefore, to include Peter in the same group of mythological figures as the Native American Wakdjunkaga or African Esu-Elegbara is somewhat unusual. But Peter Pan is not an ordinary boy characterised only by mischief and playing tricks on others. His meaning, as the meaning of every true trickster, is much more profound than that. And the trickster, after all, lies at the heart of every culture.

The aim of the present thesis is, therefore, to demonstrate that Peter Pan is a trickster in the context of Victorian England. The cultural context is very important in this respect because it elucidates the function of Peter Pan as a trickster interacting with Victorian ideas and assumptions. The nature of this interaction is one of the crucial factors of determining if Peter is a real trickster. But before deciding if Peter is a trickster or not, it is necessary to define the concept of the trickster. Actually, the trickster is so complex a figure that it is impossible to define him. Nevertheless, the aim of the theoretical part of the thesis is to identify the typical trickster features and to clarify the trickster's function, with the aim of shedding light on why he is so significant. The views of the major scholars studying the trickster are summarised in this part and the result is a set of criteria and functions that are deemed to be typical for tricksters in general. These criteria serve as a basis for the analysis of Peter Pan. The

theoretical basis of this study consists of three major works: Paul Radin's *The Trickster: A Study in Native American Mythology* which is considered a standard work in the study of the trickster, Lewis Hyde's fascinating work *The Trickster Makes This World*, which clarifies the trickster's great cultural significance, and *Mythical Trickster Figures*, a collection of essays about the trickster, edited by William J. Hynes and William G. Doty.

For the analysis of Peter Pan, all the three main versions of the story were used: *The Little White Bird* in which Peter Pan appears for the first time, the play *Peter Pan* and the novel *Peter and Wendy*. *The Annotated Peter Pan* with essays and notes by Maria Tatar serves as the main secondary source for the study of Peter Pan. The actual analysis consists of four parts. The first part focuses on Peter Pan's literary origins. Here, the character and life of J. M. Barrie, the author of Peter Pan, is explored with the aim of finding out what led to Barrie's creating the character of a boy who would not grow up, exploring the connections between the author and the character and reflecting on Barrie's significance in writing a story like this. The second part concerns Peter's mythological origins, specifically his connection to the Greek god Pan and the apostle Saint Peter. It also explores his association with *puer aeternus*, "the eternal youth," from both mythological and psychological perspectives. The third part deals with the historical context of the play, focusing on the perception and representation of children in Victorian England and Peter Pan's function in disrupting the ideas and assumptions presented in the literature of the time. The final part focuses on Neverland, specifically on how it reflects and supports the trickster in Peter. Peter Pan's trickster features are gradually explored in all four chapters of the analytical part. The overall aim of the analytical part is to conclusively demonstrate that Peter Pan, although not a strictly mythological figure, is a fully fledged trickster.

1 In Search of the True Trickster

However far one attempts to trace the trickster's tracks, the trickster is ever so much more than what we can find and understand—be he a demigod, a mythic figure, a genre, a symbolic embodiment of the human imagination, or a postmodernist hermeneut momentarily reflecting back to us our relative place in a nearly infinite chain of signifiers. Thus, when we put our studies to rest for a moment, there is both a distinct sensation of relief as well as lucid realization that whatever acumen we may have gained, future students of the trickster will still find much to study and ponder in this intriguing and perplexing phenomenon.

William J. Hynes, "Inconclusive Conclusions: Tricksters—Metaplayers and Revealers"

The main aim of the theoretical part of this thesis is to grasp, or at least outline, the elusive nature of the trickster. This is not an easy task because the trickster is the arch "enemy of boundaries" (Kerényi 185) and, as he[1] continuously disrupts them, he also manages to escape any kind of clear definition, as Doty and Hynes point out: "[T]he trickster is indefinable. In fact, to define (de-finis) is to draw borders around phenomena, and tricksters seem amazingly resistant to such capture; they are notorious border breakers" (Hynes, "Mapping" 33).

Scholars studying the trickster are divided in two respects. The first point of the debate is the term itself. At one end of the spectrum is the Jungian view of the trickster as "a universal archetype to be encountered within each of us and in most belief systems" (Hynes and Doty, "Introducing" 4). One of the most famous advocates of this view is Paul Radin, with his work *The Trickster*, which gave "the first comprehensive portrait of the trickster" (2). At the other end of the spectrum is the anthropological view denying the existence of a universal trickster figure and calling for "the

[1] The vast majority of tricksters are male. For a discussion of gender issues concerning the trickster, see Hyde 337-343.

elimination of the term 'trickster' altogether" (4). In this view, trickster figures are too diverse and complex to be subsumed within one term. That is why the approach that presupposes the existence of "a generic 'trickster figure'" (2) and compares various tricksters, focusing on what they have in common, is considered reductionist because it ignores the specifics, which are sometimes vital for proper understanding of the figure and its function within the specific culture.[2] Instead, it is suggested that we should "focus only upon one tribal or national group at a time" (5).

Concerning the debate of "universal versus particulars" (Doty and Hynes, "Historical" 13), the present thesis is trying, as Hynes or Michael P. Carroll do, to find the middle ground between the two opposite poles. The approach followed here leans to the side of the universalist view, arguing that there are "sufficient inherent similarities among these diverse [trickster] figures and their functions" (Hynes and Doty, "Introducing" 2) to make the study of a universal trickster figure possible, but trying to acknowledge the culture-specific differences at the same time.

The other point of the debate concerns the relationship between the concepts of the trickster (as a selfish buffoon) and the culture hero.[3] Paul Radin, Carl Gustav Jung, Karl Kerényi and other scholars see this relationship as a development from the former to the latter, namely from the trickster as selfish buffoon to the culture hero. They argue that this development reflects two processes: On a larger scale, it reflects the cultural evolution of humankind from primitivism to civilization, and on a smaller scale, it mirrors the development of the individual psyche, or in Jung's terms, the process of

[2] The advocates of this approach are, for instance, T. O. Beidelman; Anne Doueihi, who criticizes the ethnocentric nature of the comparative approach and its (particularly Western) cultural bias; and Gerald Vizenor who argues in his essay "Trickster Discourse: Comic Holotropes and Language Games" that the trickster is a communal sign which cannot be understood in isolation. That is, he cannot be abstracted from the social context he is an inherent part of.

[3] The distinction between these two concepts is elaborated in Michael P. Carroll's essay "The Trickster as Selfish-Buffoon and Culture Hero."

individuation. In his work *The Trickster: A Study in American Indian Mythology*, Radin tries to show this development on a collection of Winnebago stories about the trickster Wakdjunkaga. He argues that these stories demonstrate "the evolution of a Trickster from an undefined being to one with the physiognomy of man, from a being psychically undeveloped and a prey to his instincts, to an individual who is at least conscious of what he does and who attempts to become socialized" (Radin 136).

This approach is criticized by Doty, Hynes, Doueihi, Laura Makarius and others; it is seen as biased and outdated: "Radin's approach parallels earlier attempts within the academic disciplines of the history of religions and anthropology to explain the diversity of beliefs by resorting to a unitary, evolutionary model, as if all specific instances of belief represented a position on a single, worldwide scale from the simple to the complex" (Doty and Hynes, "Historical" 22). These scholars criticise the evolutionary view for its ethnocentricity. Specifically, they refuse the view of the trickster as something "inferior, as merely potential" (22). Makarius rejects Radin's description of the trickster as a primitive undifferentiated instinctual being, pointing out the trickster's opposition to the rest of the community, a quality which can be attributed only to an individual: "Far from being derived from the depths of antiquity, the trickster can be situated only at a relatively advanced moment of human history, for he is presented as an individual hero, in glaring contrast to his community and acting in opposition to it" (86).

Carroll does not see the trickster and the culture hero as different stages in the development of one figure, but rather as two different attributes of one figure. Moreover, in his essay "The Trickster as Selfish-Buffoon and Culture Hero," he disputes the supposed ubiquity of the trickster figure, claiming that modern scholars use too broad a definition of the term trickster, applying it to "any character who makes

extensive use of deceit" (105). He distinguishes two types of trickster figures: the "clever hero", a term originally introduced by Klapp, and the "selfish-buffoon" (106).

The clever hero is described as "a character who consistently outwits stronger opponents, where 'stronger' can refer to physical strength or power or both" (Carroll, "The Trickster" 106). Characters such as Davy Crockett, Robin Hood, Ulysses or Will Rogers are listed as examples of this type according to Klapp's analysis (106). But, whereas the most significant characteristic of the clever hero is his wit, the selfish-buffoon may not be particularly clever, or a typical hero, for that matter. According to Carroll, the Native American trickster is a salient example of the selfish buffoon: "'selfish' because so much of the trickster's activity is oriented toward the gratification of his enormous appetites for food and sex and 'buffoon' because the elaborate deceits that the trickster devises in order to satisfy these appetites so often backfire and leave the trickster looking incredibly foolish" (106). In the Winnebago tales studied by Radin, the trickster's extraordinary physical appetites are matched by his extremely large organs for digestion and procreation, namely his intestines and his penis, which he wears wrapped around his body or stored in a box (xxiv). In fact, he endows his penis and his anus with independent existence (56), talking to them and giving them tasks, such as guarding his meal when he is asleep (16). Moreover, some episodes are very scatological in nature.[4] However, vigorous physical appetites are not limited to Native American tricksters; they are also a typical characteristic of the picaro and other trickster-like figures.[5]

[4] A salient example is the episode "Trickster and the laxative bulb" (Radin 25-27).

[5] For typical characteristics of picaro figures see, for example, Willy Schumann's essay "Wiederkehr der Schelme."

What makes the North American trickster special is his status of a culture hero,[6] a figure that makes the emergence of human culture possible:

> [T]he Amerindian trickster is often the agent responsible for creating the conditions that allowed for the development of human civilisation.[7] [...] Quite apart from the fact that the Amerindian trickster is not particularly clever[8] (since he seems to fail at least as often as he succeeds), it is his 'culture hero' status that really sets him apart from the clever heroes of the world... (Carroll, "The Trickster" 106)

Carroll deals with the inherent contradiction in the North American tricksters differently than Radin and others. He does not argue that the selfish buffoon is gradually developing into a culture hero, but rather regards them as two attributes of the trickster. He proceeds to explain this contradiction with the help of Claude Lévi-Strauss's and Sigmund Freud's theories.

According to Lévi-Strauss, one of the functions of myths is for people to make sense of the world and help them resolve dilemmas, or more specifically, "to provide a logical structure (by which Lévi-Strauss simply means a chain of psychological associations) which enables the human mind to evade the perception of some unpleasant dilemma" (Carroll, "The Trickster" 114). In his theory of civilisation, Freud identifies the tension between the instinctual desire for sexual pleasure and for orderly social life as one of the central dilemmas of humankind:

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[6] Mac Linscott Ricketts calls the culture hero/selfish-buffoon type of the trickster the "trickster-fixer" (Carroll, "The Trickster" 111).

[7] The conditions allowing the emergence of civilisation include obtaining fire for the human beings (often stealing it), introducing agriculture (Carroll, "The Trickster" 106); securing of "food in general and of the main cultivated plants; the regulation of the seasons and of the weather; the assignment of their proper and non-destructive functions to the forces of nature; the freeing of the world from monsters, ogres and giants; the origin of death" and the like (Radin 166).

[8] One of the famous incidents that make the trickster seem rather stupid is the episode when he sees plums reflected in the surface of water. He mistakes them for real plums and, as dives into the water to get them, he knocks himself unconscious against a rock at the bottom (Radin 28).

> Freud argued that the maintenance of civilization (‘culture,’ in Levi-Strauss's sense) depends upon the renunciation of our instinctive impulses toward the immediate gratification of our sexual desires. But [...] for Freud, ‘sexual pleasure’ meant not only the pleasure derived from sexual intercourse, but any diffuse sense of physical pleasure [...] most notably [...] eating, defecating, and engaging in sexual intercourse. (Carroll, “Lévi-Strauss” 305)

In other words, unless people inhibit their desire for immediate sexual gratification, orderly social life (and by implication civilisation, too) would not be possible. According to Carroll, this is exactly the dilemma addressed by Native American trickster myths, the selfish buffoon standing for the desire for sexual gratification and the culture hero, symbolising the need for the development of civilisation. Similarly, Hynes, referring to Piper and Bettelheim, points out that the trickster enacts “the ongoing battle between the id and the superego,” constantly oscillating “between self-gratification and cultural heroism” (“Inconclusive” 209), or, in neo-Freudian terms, the trickster embodies “a struggle between the pleasure principle and the reality principle (209). In Jungian interpretation, the role of the trickster can be understood as that of the archetype of the shadow, a “breakthrough point for the surfacing of repressed values” (210), mediating between the consciousness and the unconscious: “At a deeper level he remains a creative mediator between that which is differentiated, ordered, predictable, and distinct, on the one hand, and that which is undifferentiated, unordered, spontaneous, and whole, on the other” (210). As such, the trickster can be seen as “the embodiment of such productive chaos as creativity, play, spontaneity, inventiveness, ingenuity, and adventure” (210).

Going back to Carroll’s hypothesis, the tension created by the two contradictory attributes (the selfish buffoon and the culture hero) of the trickster reflects the tension between the two contradictory needs of humankind. From this hypothesis follows that if

the sexual desire is not restricted in any way, human society cannot emerge, which is again implied in the trickster stories, as Carroll points out, commenting on the four types of animals typically associated with Native American tricksters, namely, coyote, raven, hare and spider:

> [A]ll four types of animals are characterized by extremely *solitary* habits [...]. Yet group living is the very essence of human society, and so by associating the trickster with solitary animals, the myths are in effect associating the "immediate gratification of sexual impulses" with the absence of "culture" – and thereby establishing an association that reflects the second part of our dilemma, namely, that the immediate gratification of our sexual impulses would lead to the destruction of culture. ("The Trickster" 115-116, original emphasis)

Carroll seems to consider mainly the figures from the Native American mythology as tricksters in the real sense of the word. After all, the term was first introduced in connection with the study of North American Indian mythology (106). He does apply this term to other trickster figures, as well, but only with reservations: "If we use the term trickster in its most general sense, that is, if trickster simply means 'deceiver', then all sorts of tricksters appear in African mythology" (118). In other words, he does not consider most African tricksters as tricksters in the true sense of the word. However, he does acknowledge four of them:

> If we restrict our attention to those African tricksters who *are* led into buffoonery by their sexual appetites and who *are* simultaneously culture heroes, then our list of African tricksters reduces to only four well-documented cases. These four cases involve, respectively, the character called "Anansi" by the Ashanti, the character called "Ture" by the Azande, the character called "Legba" by the Fon, and the character called "Eshu" by the Yoruba. (119, original emphasis)

Carroll, referring to Jay D. Edwards, also explains why the tricksters of some disadvantaged groups, such as African Americans, are not culture heroes. These groups

are “regularly and systematically denied access to the benefits of ‘culture’” (125) and that is why they are likely to value concepts like orderly human society much less. Consequently (if the hypothesis is valid), the Freudian dilemma does not arise here. Accordingly, Carroll classifies the African American trickster figures as clever heroes, based on the fact that they are not culture heroes, hence no tricksters in the true sense of the word.

That is where the present thesis departs from Carroll’s view. Here, the status of the culture hero is not considered to be an essential criterion for classifying a character as a trickster. The reason why follows the difference between mythology and literature. One of the purposes of mythology is to provide an explanation of the world: how it was created; how people, animals and plants came into being; and how it works in general. That is where culture heroes come in. However, literature usually does not have this explanatory function and that could explain why the tricksters from folk stories, fairy tales and literature in general are not culture heroes. In contrast to myths, one of the purposes of the African American trickster stories could be (among other things) expressing the power relationship between black people and white people, slaves and masters, which is more relevant to their situation than trying to explain how the world came to be. This can be shown on the stories about the Signifying Monkey in which the weak but cunning monkey outwits the strong but a little dense lion by making him believe that the elephant insulted him and, in this way, driving the lion against the much stronger elephant.[9]

[9] Henry Louis Gates finds this interpretation too simplistic because if we understand the story as the battle between slaves and masters, we ignore the essential presence of the third character – the elephant. But he does acknowledge that the Signifying Monkey tales can be thought of as “chiastic fantasies of reversal of power relationships” (59). Through the elephant, the Monkey humiliates and dethrones the Lion, subverting his position of the King of the Jungle (63).

In the present thesis, the classification of a character as a trickster is based on the function of the character and on a set of criteria. Hynes identifies six common characteristics of the trickster (not to be confused with a precise definition), which should be considered as an initial guide to the study of the trickster. He sees his fundamentally ambiguous and anomalous nature to be at the heart of his personality. On this characteristic, the other five are based, namely the fact that he is a "(2) deceiver/trick-player, (3) shape-shifter, (4) situation-invertor, (5) messenger/imitator of the gods, and (6) sacred/lewd bricoleur" (Hynes, "Mapping" 34). However, Hynes does not see these characteristics as essential qualities of a trickster. In other words, not every trickster figure has to have all these features to be defined as a trickster. Nevertheless, according to Hynes, these are "the most common to the trickster figure and probably are most central to his identity" (45).

One of the most central features of the trickster is indeed ambiguity, or rather polyvalence, because describing him as merely ambiguous would be too simplistic, as Hynes points out ("Mapping" 35). The trickster stands for the "multivalence of life" (Pelton qtd. in Hynes 35). That is why it is impossible to define him: "[T]he trickster is always more than can be glimpsed at any one place or in any one embodiment" (35). Moreover, the trickster not only is polyvalent, he also reveals the polyvalence of the world around him (Hyde 290). Indeed, he is able to show any seeming unity as a mere illusion by "uncover[ing] the hidden duplicity" and "confus[ing] polarity" (231). Hyde demonstrates this trickster function on the example of Frederick Douglass:[10] "The longer we listen to Douglass's voice, the more eternals turn into accidents, unities into confusions, and purities into obscenities" (233). The trickster is indeed "the epitome of

[10] He does not consider Frederick Douglass to be a real trickster. Nevertheless, he identifies some important trickster features in his character.

paradox" (Gates 30), symbolising "the unity of opposed forces" (6). In his kaleidoscopic personality, the opposites do not exclude, but rather somehow complement each other: "Trickster is at one and the same time creator and destroyer, giver and negator, he who dupes others and who is always duped himself" (Radin xxiii). He is both a selfish buffoon and a culture hero, "clumsy and superhuman; cheater and cheated; disruptive and restorative; stupid and cunning; impulsive and scheming; uncaring and generous; regressive and sneaky progressive" (Abrams 33); "clever predator and stupid prey" (Hyde 19). Sticking to only one side of the opposite would be too limiting. That is why the trickster does not pick sides. Instead, he blurs the boundaries between them: "We constantly distinguish—right and wrong, sacred and profane, clean and dirty, male and female, young and old, living and dead—and in every case trickster will cross the line and confuse the distinction" (7). Lévi-Strauss elucidates the way the trickster disrupts binary oppositions like the ones mentioned above. He argues that the trickster does that by "discovering a third or bridging term", such as a carrion eater, which is used in his hypothesis for describing Native American tricksters. As carrion eaters, these tricksters bridge the opposition between "herbivore and carnivore" (Lévi-Strauss qtd. in Hyde 267). However, Carroll disproves this hypothesis by pointing out that, among Native American tricksters, only Raven can be considered a carrion eater. It is not so clear in the case of Coyote, and Hare is most definitely not ("Lévi-Strauss" 301).

Nevertheless, the principle itself works. Tricksters are not always carrion eaters, but they have the same function as the third term: they are "the lords of in-between" (Hyde 6), the ultimate mediators:

> All tricksters are "on the road." [...] The road that trickster travels is a spirit road as well as a road in fact. He is the adept who can move between heaven and

> earth, and between the living and the dead. As such, he is sometimes the messenger of the gods and sometimes the guide of souls, carrying the dead into the underworld or opening the tomb to release them when they must walk among us. (6)

Indeed, boundaries do not exist for the trickster, or at least, they are no real obstacles for him – he is "a boundary-crosser" (7) whose place is at the boundary. This corresponds to the fact that he is an in-between. If his task is to mediate between two places, for instance between heaven and earth, the most appropriate place for him to be is at the boundary between these two places: "Every group has its edge, its sense of in and out, and trickster is always there, at the gates of the city and the gates of life, making sure there is commerce" (7). As the ultimate in-between, the trickster does not belong anywhere. To belong somewhere means in a way to be defined by place – by the culture, customs and rules of the place. That is why he feels more comfortable at the border, or rather outside the borders and boundaries, where he is not bound by anything: "Anomalous, *a-nomos*, without normativity, the trickster typically exists outside or across *all* borders, classifications, and categories" (Hynes and Steele 161). In fact, this could be another reason why the trickster is associated with animals characterised by solitary habits. Being outside the boundary implies not being part of any group. Furthermore, the fact that the trickster is situated at the margin does not mean he passively accepts the borders. Rather, he shifts them as it suits him: "[T]he best way to describe trickster is to say simply that the boundary is where he will be found—sometimes drawing the line, sometimes crossing it, sometimes erasing or moving it, but always there, the god of the threshold in all its forms" (Hyde 7-8).

As was established, the trickster's place is always at the margin. In fact, this could be considered as an essential characteristic of the trickster because there are no tricksters at the centre: "[T]rickster belongs to the periphery, not to the center. If

trickster were ever to get into power, he would stop being trickster" (Hyde 13). Being at the centre would mean being part of a certain structure, which would again imply being bound by the structure and that is very much against trickster's nature. Moreover, one of trickster's functions is related to his marginal position. Hyde points out that structures are based on the principle of exclusion: "[A]ll structure—no matter how 'good'—exists by excluding something" (286). By excluding what does not fit, the structure achieves purity. But "purity often ends in sterility" (185) and what is sterile is dead. This is where the trickster comes in. The opposite of structure is motley (297) and the trickster, as the embodiment of ambiguity and paradox, is the exact opposite of structure; he is motley. More specifically, he symbolises "motley's destructuring force" (298), disrupting the boundary between order and its exclusions and connecting them. Indeed, he is the one that brings back what was excluded – the dirt, the necessary "by-product of creating order" (176) and, in this way, the whole system is recreated, revived or even reborn. As Hyde points out, erasing or violating the line between the dirty and the clean is what tricksters in general tend to and like to do (177). In fact, it is one of their most important functions because, by being agents of disorder and chaos, tricksters provide the right balance for the established order. In this way, they prevent stagnation and subsequent death of the system. According to Hyde, this is why telling of trickster tales is so important: It facilitates "ritual contact with dirt—any sort of sanctioned, structured, and contained involvement with things that are normally out of bounds" (186). That is why motifs like sacrilege, uninhibited physical appetites, incest, or taboo violations are an important part of trickster stories. These motifs are the dirt that has been excluded from the order and that is symbolically brought back through the trickster stories. The ritual contact with dirt, then, has two functions: It prevents "the violence and sterility that seem to accompany purified order, while allowing, on the other hand, not only the

liveliness of a commerce between order and its exclusions but the possibility of fundamental change when the old order is dying or in crisis" (190).

With trickster's being out of place (or structure) is also connected the question of his identity or rather the lack thereof. People are usually defined by place; their identity is based on the group they belong to, and the trickster does not belong anywhere. Actually, his lack of identity corresponds again to what Hyde writes about motley: "Motley bespeaks a lack of identity. [...] [T]he character in motley is never the hero, never the king, though he or she has a freedom of motion those others lack" (298). Not only has the trickster a great freedom of motion, he is also free to be whoever he chooses to be, because he typically has shape-shifting abilities. These range from minor alterations, such as changing his clothes and appearance, to radical transformations, such as changing his sex or even species. He uses his shape-shifting qualities to deceive others and to get what he wants:

> As shape-shifter, the trickster can alter his shape of bodily appearance in order to facilitate deception. Not even the boundaries of species or sexuality are safe, for they can be readily dissolved by the trickster's disguises and transmorphisms. Relatively minor shape-shifting through disguise may involve nothing more than changing clothes with another. (Hynes, "Mapping" 36)

In one of the Winnebago trickster tales, the trickster transforms into a dead animal to get his revenge on a hawk which played a trick on him (Radin 35). In another story, Hare kills several eaglets, skins them and puts their feathers on to be able to fly (65). In yet another story, he kills a young chief, skins him and puts his skin on so that he looks exactly like him. In this way, he manages to steal a head-dress that he came for (84-85). Furthermore, the Winnebago trickster is not only able to change his sex, but also get impregnated afterwards – not without a hidden agenda, of course (23). In short, the trickster is "the master of metamorphosis" (Hynes, "Mapping" 37).

Since the trickster takes upon himself the appearance of other people, animals or things, it is reasonable to assume that his shape-shifting abilities are based on imitation. Indeed, the trickster is not only a skilful shape-shifter, but also an eager imitator, albeit not always successful. In a story called "The Bungling Host," Coyote tries to imitate other animals in their ways of obtaining food, but fails miserably. Hyde points out that "each of these animals has a way of being in the world; each has his nature" (42). This means that, unlike the trickster, all these animals have their own identity. The trickster's imitating skills then compensate for his lack of identity, of his own way: "Coyote [...] seems to have no way, no nature, no knowledge. He has the ability to copy others, but no ability of his own" (43). Indeed, his failure at imitating others, as shown in "The Bungling Host", is definitely not a rule. Elsewhere, he is quite a deft imitator. Actually, imitation is an important part of the broad array of strategies the trickster uses for deception: "[H]e is the Great Imitator who adopts the many ways of those around him. Unconstrained by instinct, he is the author of endlessly creative and novel deceptions, from hidden hooks to tracks that are impossible to read" (77).

As the trickster is able to transform himself, he is also capable of transforming other things. Hynes uses Lévi-Strauss' term "bricoleur" to describe the trickster's transformative abilities: "The bricoleur is a tinker or fix-it person, noted for his ingenuity in transforming anything at hand in order to form a creative solution" (Hynes, "Mapping" 42). His transformative abilities are crucial for his role of a culture hero because, thanks to them, he creates things that are useful for mankind. In the Winnebago trickster tales, for instance, the trickster transforms the pieces of his penis that the chipmunk gnawed off into plants intended for human beings to use, such as potatoes, turnips, artichokes, or rice (Radin 39). Hynes calls the trickster "Sacred and Lewd Bricoleur" because he is able to transcend the boundary between these two

concepts: “The trickster manifests a distinctive transformative ability: he can find the lewd in the sacred and the sacred in the lewd, and new life from both” (Hynes, “Mapping” 42). Accordingly, the trickster is able to transform lewd acts or objects “into occasions of insight, vitality, and new inventive creations” (42), as in the example noted above.

With his transformative power, his role of the “situation-invertor” (Hynes, “Mapping” 37) is connected. With the trickster running around, nobody and nothing can be sure about their position or status:

> As situation-invertor, the trickster exhibits typically the ability to overturn any person, place, or belief, no matter how prestigious. There is no “too much” for this figure. No order is too rooted, no taboo too sacred, no god too high, no profanity too scatological that it cannot be broached or inverted. What prevails is toppled, what is bottom becomes top, what is outside turns inside, what is inside turns outside, and on and on in an unending concatenation of contingency. (37)

Indeed, the trickster is the embodiment of uncertainty and chance. It was already said that the trickster provides the necessary balance between order and disorder. Similarly, he also provides the balance between control and contingency. He is the one that always discovers the exception to the rule, as Hyde shows on the case of Loki, the trickster from Norse mythology (106-107). According to the myth, the goddess Frigg wanted to protect her son Baldr from his prophesied death by making all the things in the world promise not to hurt him. That is, all the things except the mistletoe, which she considered too young and tender. Loki is the one that discovers this exception and brings about the death of a great and seemingly indestructible god – he is a situation-invertor par excellence.

As noted earlier, some of the typical trickster features include voracious physical appetites, which basically means constant hunger for food and sex. Not surprisingly,

some trickster stories are very scatological in nature. In one of the Winnebago tales, for example, the trickster eats a laxative bulb and keeps defecating until he disappears in a heap of his own faeces (Radin 25-27). Eulenspiegel, a German trickster figure, is not ashamed to empty his bowels wherever and whenever it suits him, sometimes especially at places where it is not appropriate, such as in a church,[11] and often to prove a point. Episodes like this, coupled with trickster's lack of inhibitions, show his utter disrespect for rules and social or moral values that are often associated with them: "He incarnates lack of discipline, disobedience, and rebellion" (Makarius 82). This makes sense because, as was established, the trickster is an enemy of boundaries and hence no friend of rules. This is again connected with two of his functions.

First, the fact that the trickster does not feel any inhibitions and hence is not restricted by any rules helps him realise his full potential. There is nothing to hold him back. Moreover, he not only disobeys the existing rules, he also feels free to disrupt them (which is actually what he does with boundaries in general). In this way, he helps the established systems and orders change and realise their potential:

> [H]e always breaks in, just as the unconscious does, to trip up the rational situation. He's both a fool and someone who's beyond the system. And the trickster hero represents all those possibilities of life that your mind hasn't decided it wants to deal with. The mind structures a lifestyle, and the fool or trickster represents another whole range of possibilities. He doesn't respect the values that you've set up for yourself, and smashes them. (Campbell qtd. in Hynes and Doty, "Introducing" 1)

This also means that the trickster works as a precaution to stagnation (as was noted earlier). He prevents the established systems from getting stuck in a rut: "[T]he breaching and upending process initiated by tricksters in their challenges to the accepted

[11] See *Ein kurzweilig Lesen von Till Eulenspiegel*. Leipzig: P. Reclam, 1957. Eulenspiegel is even capable of serving his faeces to others and, in one extreme case, eating them himself (20, 47).

ways of doing things highlights the possibilities within a society for creative reflection on and change of the society's meanings" (8). Moreover, the trickster has no difficulty breaking the rules connected to social or moral values because, typically, he is an amoral being: "He knows neither good nor evil yet he is responsible for both. He possesses no values, moral or social, is at the mercy of his passions and appetites, yet through his actions all values come into being" (Radin xxiii).

Paradoxically, however, by breaking the rules, the trickster sometimes upholds the existing system. In fact, this function is again twofold. First, by breaking the rules, breaching the boundaries and profaning the beliefs, the trickster draws attention to them and makes them more explicit:

> By breaking the patterns of a culture the trickster helps define those patterns. By acting irresponsibly he helps define responsibility. [...] He throws doubt on realities but helps concentrate attention on realities. He crosses supposedly unbreakable boundaries between culture and nature, life and death, and thereby draws attention to those boundaries. (Vecsey 106)

When profaning central beliefs, tricksters "focus attention precisely on the nature of such beliefs" (Hynes and Doty, "Introducing" 2) and help to clarify their purpose. By breaking the rules, they are able to show the consequences of what happens if the rules are not observed. Accordingly, the trickster tales "can be seen as moral examples re-affirming the rules of society" (Street qtd. in Hynes and Doty, "Introducing" 6-7). However, by showing the consequences that follow breaking the rules, tricksters can either highlight the importance of the rules, or show their insignificance (if the rules do not make sense any more). In the latter case, tricksters facilitate the necessary change. They are able to debunk even the most basic premises on which the society is based. The seemingly fundamental truths are shown as illusions: "The true trickster's trickery

calls into question fundamental assumptions about the way the world is organized, and reveals the possibility of transforming them (even if often for ignoble ends)" (Lock).

Second, the trickster stories function as a vent for pent-up anger and other feelings of frustration resulting from the constraints imposed on the individuals by the established systems. In this way, the stories prevent possible revolts because the "potentially disruptive feelings are released" through the figure of the trickster (Hynes and Steele 171). This function is not limited to Native American trickster tales. Hyde illustrates this crucial function on the examples of the medieval Feast of Fools and the Saturnalia in Ancient Rome:

> Mocking but not changing the order of things, ritual dirt-work operates as a kind of safety valve, allowing internal conflicts and nagging anomalies to be expressed without serious consequences. [...] Carnival is thus a sort of psychic and social drainage system in which structure's garbage gets expressed only to be carted away when the banners come down. (187)

Hyde explains how exactly these feasts work, and summarises the purpose and the mechanism behind them as follows: "[T]o indulge the appetites is to tame dissent; to remove that indulgence is to court rebellion" (235). That is why feasts like that were used to prevent slave revolts.

To conclude, at the core of trickster's personality seems to be his opposition to borders, boundaries and limits in general. Tricksters do not observe rules because that would limit their playful freedom. They have no inhibitions and hence nothing to restrain their voracious appetites. They live outside borders, at the margin, because they do not want to be enclosed in any system or order. Accordingly, they have no identity of their own because that would imply limiting themselves to one way of living. Their chameleonic personality allows them to be whoever they want or need to be at a particular moment in a particular situation. What is more, they make the world they live

in more like them: ambiguous, polyvalent, changeable, and unpredictable. The trickster is “the spirit of disorder” and “a mighty life-spirit” (Radin 185, 189). He is the one who messes up the order – in physical terms, he is the agent of entropy; in literary terms, he is “a postmodernist gone riot” (Hynes and Steele 162); he embodies the energising force of chaos, change and spontaneous creativity.

2 The Betwixt and Between: Peter Pan as a Trickster Figure

Unlike the tricksters from Native American and African mythologies, Peter Pan is a literary figure, which came to being during J. M. Barrie's adventures with the five Llewelyn Davies boys. However, Peter Pan is no ordinary literary figure; the wonderfully imaginative and whimsical story about the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up left an indelible impression on its audience and gradually evolved into a myth which has become an essential part of English culture. Indeed, Peter Pan is no ordinary book (or play); with his work, Barrie "created a new mythology" (Tartar, "An Introduction" 239).

Peter Pan made his first appearance in the novel *The Little White Bird*, "the ur-Peter Pan" (Tatar, "A Note" xxxi), in 1902. This book presents a story about an elderly bachelor and his friendship with a boy named David. Peter's role here is rather marginal, compared to the other works devoted to him. Nevertheless, it is the first time the character of Peter Pan appeared outside the close circle of Barrie and "the Five" (Tartar, "J. M. Barrie" lxxxiv). In 1904, Peter Pan came to life onstage with a far greater impact, especially on children. In fact, Barrie had to introduce the element of fairy dust as a condition of flying because, having seen the play, the excited children were trying to fly, jumping from their beds and hurting themselves in the process ("Peter Pan"). In 1906, the chapters from *The Little White Bird* devoted to Peter Pan were published separately (and with minor changes) as *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens*. Finally, in 1911, the novel *Peter and Wendy* was published, contributing to the everlasting popularity of the story (Tatar, "An Introduction" 237). This version of the story is used in the present thesis as the main source for the analysis of Peter Pan, as it is "one that captures, crystallizes, and broadens what Barrie wanted to say with the figure of Peter Pan" ("A Message" xx).

Nowadays, the story of Peter Pan is available as a play, a novel and as a film in several adaptations, but it was not always so: Barrie refused to write the story down at first. He was unwilling to capture Peter Pan and imprison him in on paper (Tatar, "A Message" xviii-xix) as this would stop Peter's development and confine him in one version of a story that would not change. One can see how this would be very much against the nature of any trickster. In fact, this could be one of the reasons why all Native American and African trickster tales work great as oral narratives – allowing for a constant change and adaptation – but lose some of their essential features when put in writing.

The aim of this part of the thesis is not only to demonstrate that Peter Pan can be considered a fully fledged trickster figure in the context of British culture, but also to show that the author, the narrator and the narrative itself are imbued with the trickster spirit as well.

2.1 J. M. Barrie: A Boy Trapped in a Man's Body

In many ways, J. M. Barrie was forever straddling lines—betwixt and between in real life and as narrator in his fictions.

Maria Tatar, "Introduction to J. M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*"

Before beginning with the analysis of the character of Peter Pan, it is worth considering his author. As one studies the life and the personality of J. M. Barrie, it comes as no surprise that it was him that produced a character that can be regarded as a trickster figure in the context of the British culture because he is himself endowed with some of the typical trickster traits.

As noted earlier, one of the typical trickster features is the ability and the urge to imitate others, often resulting in the lack of the trickster's own identity. Barrie developed this skill after the death of his brother David, their mother's favourite. He wanted to alleviate his mother's suffering by impersonating her favourite child: "Barrie describes how he developed an 'intense desire ... to become so like [David] that even my mother should not see the difference,' and he practiced in secret until he had the boy's whistle and stance (legs apart and hands in the pockets of his knickerbockers) down pat" (Tatar, "J. M. Barrie" lxxii-lxxiii). But he did not stop after his mother's recovery. Imitating and impersonating others had become his habit which came to be manifested in his writing: "Barrie himself recognized that his own voice rarely came through, for he had a habit of impersonating others: 'Writing as a doctor, a sandwich-board man, a member of the Parliament, a mother, and explorer, a child ... a professional beauty, a dog, a cat. He did not know his reason for this, but I can see that it was to escape identifying himself with any views ...'" (lxxvi). Indeed, in his work, Barrie seems to be unsure about his identity, or rather, is unwilling to accept just one

identity. That is why he is often changing perspectives, which can be demonstrated on his use of pronouns: "In his newspaper articles, as in his fiction, he moves seamlessly from 'I' to 'he' or from 'we' to 'you,' never allowing himself to be pinned down to one identity or point of view" (lxxvi). By not restricting himself to one view in his writing, he can enjoy the freedom of being whoever he wants to be, just like the trickster.

Most importantly, however, Barrie was a betwixt and between himself. With his work, he managed to "level distinctions between adult and child, as well as to dismantle the opposition between creator and consumer […]. At long last, here was a cultural story that would bridge the still vast literary divide between adults and children"[12] (Tatar, "Introduction" xlvi). The reason why he was successful in breaking down this barrier may lie in the fact that, psychologically, he was a still a boy, which made him an excellent candidate for the role of a mediator between the child and the adult: "Barrie's addiction to youth—his infatuation with its games and pleasures—enabled him to write something that, for the first time, truly was *for* children even as it appealed to adult sensibilities" (xliii, original emphasis). In this respect, Barrie performed some of the typical trickster functions, disrupting boundaries, subverting hierarchies and opening up new possibilities:

> Barrie turned a category that was once "impossible" (for [Jacqueline] Rose there is nothing but adult agency in children's literature) into a genre that opened up possibilities, suggesting that adults and children could together inhabit a zone where all experience the pleasures of a story, even if in different ways. Old-fashioned yet also postmodern before his time, Barrie overturned hierarchies boldly and playfully,

[12] This is also one of the reasons why Pan is suitable as an inspiration for Barrie's iconic character. In his essay "Pan and Puer Aeternus," Perrot comments on the complexity of the works of Henry James, Oscar Wilde and Robert Louis Stevenson, arguing that it derived from "the union of opposing attitudes" and that it "fostered a type of narrative that can be appreciated by adults and young readers alike" (165). More importantly, he gives credit for this uniting effect of their works to the god Pan: "This was the ultimate magic of the double-natured god: to bring together what was usually kept apart" (165).

> enabling adults and children to share the reading experience in ways that few writers before him had made possible. (xliii)

In fact, writing the story of Peter Pan had a therapeutic effect on Barrie, who, just like his iconic character, psychologically remained a boy even after he had grown up: "Barrie bemoaned the fact that 'he was still a boy, he was ever a boy, trying sometimes, as now, to be a man.... He was so fond of being a boy that he could not grow up.'" (Tatar, "J. M. Barrie" lxxxvii). One of his notebook entries clarifies the relevance of Peter Pan to his own life: "It is as if long after writing 'P. Pan' its true meaning came to me—Desperate attempt to grow up but can't" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 12, note 1). Unlike Peter Pan, however, Barrie could not avoid physically growing up and so became a boy trapped in a man's body. As compensation, he enjoyed the joys of childhood vicariously through his writing and through his friendship with the Five.

In *Peter and Wendy*, Barrie uses the same strategy as in his previous work, i.e. refusing to identify himself clearly with one view. Indeed, the narrator's identity is not clear because he sometimes uses a child's perspective and at other times adopts an adult's view: He is "forever flirting with readers without revealing an identity of his own. Shifting rapidly and with ease from the register of an adult narrator to that of a child, he seems sometimes to be a grown-up […] and sometimes a child" (Tatar, "Introduction" xlvii). While using "sophisticated adult diction," the narrator is also "playful, capricious, and partisan in ways that third-person narrators rarely are" (xlvii). Especially the words "playful" and "capricious," coupled with the narrator's overall paradoxical nature, evoke the trickster spirit that permeates the whole work. In fact, the narrator is able to combine both of the perspectives in one sentence: "Off we skip like the most heartless things in the world, which is what children are, but so attractive; and we have an entirely selfish time, and then when we have need of special attention we

nobly return for it, confident that we shall be embraced instead of smacked" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 126). As Tatar points out in her notes, the narrator skilfully combines the child's perspective with that of the adult, identifying himself with the children as the use of the pronoun "we" indicates, but at the same time producing adult judgments about the children, describing them as "heartless," "attractive," and "selfish" (126, note 2). Even when Barrie writes about himself in his introduction to *Peter Pan*, he keeps switching from "I" to "he" and vice versa, using the third person when writing about his younger self.

Moreover, there is one more barrier that Barrie manages to break down in his story, and that is the division between people and animals. By putting a dog, Nana, in the role of the nurse and later making Mr. Darling live in her kennel, Barrie managed to confuse the division between the world of people and that of animals (Barrie, *The Annotated* 16, note 12).

In one of the quotes noted earlier in the thesis, the trickster is called "a postmodernist gone riot." The trickster indeed shares many of his features and some of his functions with postmodernism. Accordingly, the trickster-like narrator of *Peter and Wendy* offers not only multiple perspectives (or rather, is switching between the two mentioned already), but also multiple outcomes, which is a strategy typical for postmodernism. To put it more precisely, the narrator cannot decide which story to tell; he is not sure how to proceed with the narrative: "The extraordinary upshot of this adventure was—but we have not decided yet that this is the adventure we are to narrate" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 93). Thereupon, the narrator offers summaries of several adventures, voicing the flow of his thoughts and trying to decide which one to narrate in more detail. What is more, at times, the narrator seems to be genuinely confused about the story, supporting the impression that "the characters have a life of their own, with

motives that are not always transparent to him" (171, note 17). This is particularly evident in his following statement: "Now I understand what had hitherto puzzled me, why when Peter had exterminated the pirates he did not return to the island and leave Tink to escort the children to the mainland. This trick had been in his head all the time" (171-172). This, indeed, conveys the impression that the narrator has no control over the characters. In her notes, Tartar draws attention to the postmodern nature of this strategy: "The narrator produces a fictional space in which multiple outcomes are possible and in which everything remains provisional and contingent. Like Peter, the narrator is unpredictable, mercurial, and resistant to being fixed" (93, note 12). Again, the words "contingent," "unpredictable," "mercurial" and "resistant to being fixed," denoting some of the most typical trickster characteristics, strongly indicate the trickster nature of the narrator's voice.

Interestingly enough, in his introduction to the play, Barrie confuses the notion of the authorship by saying: "I have no recollection of writing the play of *Peter Pan*" ("To the Five" 216). In this way, he supports (even if indirectly and may be unintentionally) the mythological character of the work. The story indeed resembles a myth in some respects. Not only does it revolve around a trickster figure, it also has a quasi-explanatory function, providing an imaginative explanation of (among other things) the way children come into this world: "[A]ll children in our part of London were once birds in the Kensington Gardens; and [...] the reason there are bars on nursery windows and a tall fender by the fire is because very little people sometimes forget that they have no longer wings, and try to fly away through the window or up the chimney" (Barrie, *The Little* 16-17). The birds that are to become little children are born on a special island in the Kensington Gardens, from which they are then sent to their prospective mothers. No people have access to this unique island, except for Peter Pan

because of his liminal status: “No one who is human, except Peter Pan (and he is only half human), can land on the island, but you may write what you want (boy or girl, dark or fair) on a piece of paper, and then twist it into the shape of a boat and slip it into the shape of a boat and slip it into the water, and it reaches Peter Pan's island after dark” (106). Through the whole introduction to *Peter Pan*, Barrie continues doubting his authorship of the story: “Notwithstanding other possibilities, I think I wrote Peter” (“To the Five” 218). His uncertainty is emphasised by the phrase “I think.” In fact, he even tries to come up with some evidence of his authorship: “This journey through the house may not convince any one that I wrote Peter, but it does suggest me as a likely person” (219). All this uncertainty of Barrie’s about having written the work seems to suggest that *Peter Pan* is a product of his unconscious and supports the dreamy and mythical nature of the story.

The story indeed seems to have a life of its own, or at least that is how Barrie perceives it: “The conventional story […] is far less stable than most of us realize. […] For Barrie, Peter Pan existed in performance, and the various typescripts reveal exactly how much he loved to see the character come alive onstage and transform and renew himself with each new production” (Tatar, “A Message” xviii). The permanency and lifelessness of the written word is probably one of the reasons why Barrie did not want to “fix his iconic character in print” (xviii). However, through the capricious and mercurial narrator, he managed to bring life into the written story, with all its contingency and unpredictability.

Even the method that Barrie used for constructing the story brings the trickster into mind:

> Barrie borrowed much from his literary forebears, creating a story that is not so much original as syncretic, uniting disparate, often contradictory bits and pieces from his own experience and from the foundational stories of Western culture […]. It was Barrie’s

> genius to use that same skill, what the anthropologists call *bricolage*, making resourceful use of materials close at hand to construct a new myth. (Tatar, "Introduction" xlviii)

Indeed, by his ingenious use of material that was available for creating something new, Barrie came close to the bricoleur aspect of the trickster.

The reason the author and narrator are analysed here along with the character of Peter Pan is to ensure that the trickster will not be taken out of context. According to Gerald Vizenor, it is not possible to successfully isolate the trickster from his background, which he is an inherent part of. To decontextualise the trickster in this way would mean to seriously distort his nature: "The trickster is a sign, a communal signification that cannot be separated or understood in isolation" (189). Vizenor describes the trickster as "a comic holotrope, and a *sign* in a language game; a communal sign shared between listeners, readers and four points of view in third person narratives" (187, original emphasis). The four points of view include the "author, narrator, characters and audience," which are "the signifiers and comic holotropes in trickster narratives" (188). The author and the narrator have already been analysed, and so one of the following chapter will be dealing with the audience – specifically, with Victorian England and its perception of the child. But, before that, Peter Pan's mythological origins must be explored. Without them, the context would not be complete.

2.2 Mythological Origins of Peter Pan

Peter Pan's mythological origins are particularly interesting in the context of the present thesis because, among his mythological ancestors, one can find figures such as Hermes, the trickster of Western mythology and the father of the god Pan, from whom Peter got his second name. Peter's first name is no less interesting because he shares it with Saint Peter, the apostle guarding the gate to heaven and the trickster figure of popular Christianity.

Identifying Saint Peter as a trickster figure may be somewhat surprising because, as described in the New Testament, Saint Peter may seem to have little in common with a typical trickster. However, Hynes and Steele managed to identify several typical trickster features in his character, which then served as a basis for his development into a fully fledged trickster in some popular interpretations of his character. In their essay "Saint Peter: Apostle Transfigured into Trickster," they describe the process of how Peter was gradually transformed from a relatively respectable and decent apostle into a bungling and rebellious trickster.

Saint Peter has definitely one of the most important trickster features and that is the ambiguous and paradoxical nature: He is both "the living stone of faith and the stumbling stone of disbelief;" he can be both "a babbling dunce (Mark 9:5) and an eloquent spokesperson (Acts 1-3)" (Hynes and Steele 162). Like Coyote, he is sometimes a successful imitator, and at other times a bungling fool, as when he imitates "with inconsistent success" Jesus walking on water (162). Moreover, his death symbolically represents his abilities of an imitator and a situation-invertor: There is a "coincidence of *imitation* and *inversus* when it comes time for Simon Peter to die; he asks that he might be crucified—but upside down" (162). Like Hermes, he is a messenger and a psychopomp, guarding the borders of the world of the dead by holding

the keys of heaven (162-163). Finally, Saint Peter is a taboo-breaker and a cultural transformer, resetting dietary categories and redefining the limits of who can become Christian (163). On the other hand, he is not particularly deceitful, shows very little trickery, no pranks, no lewd behaviour and no transmorphisms (164), therefore lacking some obvious trickster features.

Hynes and Steele argue that the trickster elements in Peter's character are ignored by official Christianity, which is intolerant of these "flaws," but they are embraced and further developed by popular Christianity:

> Thus mainstream Christianity, largely intolerant of disruptive behaviour in general and of the seemingly chaotic activity of the trickster in particular, often passes over the trickster elements in the scriptural portrait of Peter as anomalous to Peter's real character, or it simply views these elements as aspects of human sinfulness that were overcome by faith in Jesus. Popular Christianity on the other hand, more enamored of the acknowledgment and celebration of disorder, seizes these same trickster elements and expands the picture of Peter to include a wider range of features typical of a more fully blown trickster figure. (160)

Indeed, in popular Christianity, Peter has been developed into a figure which resembles a typical trickster, ignoring the rules and disrespecting even the highest of authorities: "Here Peter has often been celebrated as a trickster who constantly does everything he shouldn't and who upends every situation and authority including that of Jesus himself" (159). Unlike official Christianity, popular Christianity recognised the need for the trickster with his essential function of a steam valve, airing frustrations and releasing disruptive feelings (171).

Tatar explains the meaning of Peter Pan's name and his connection to the apostle Peter:

> The name is a curious mix of Christian and pagan associations. The biblical Simon Peter is known as the apostle most passionate about his faith, and his story resonates with the conflict between faith and reason in *Peter Pan*. In Matthew 16, Jesus renames

> Simon and calls him Peter: founder of the church: "You are Peter, the Rock; and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall never conquer it. I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." Still, it is Peter who denies his relationship to Jesus three times 'before the cock crows,' and thereby becomes a figure who is both solidly faithful yet also lacking in faith. Barrie could not have found a better way to capture Peter Pan's loyalty to Neverland, on the one hand, and his capricious, volatile nature, on the other. (Tatar, "Introduction" xlix)

Yet the ambiguous nature is not the only thing Peter Pan shares with the apostle. Another thing they have in common is their role as psychopomps. Saint Peter guards the gate to heaven and Peter Pan accompanies children who have died on their way to the world of the dead: "There were odd stories about him; as that when children died he went part of the way with them, so that they should not be frightened" (Barrie, *Peter* 8). Even his clothing symbolises his position at the crossing between life and death: He is "clad in skeleton leaves and the juices that ooze out of trees" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 25). The skeleton leaves underscore his "connection with seasonal change and death," whereas "the oozing juices that hold the leaves together weld vitality to the hint of death in 'skeleton' leaves" (25, note 30). Moreover, Neverland, Peter's home, could be interpreted as the land of the dead, which supports Peter's role of a psychopomp: "As a place where lost boys sleep, it [...] becomes the domain of the dead, with the boys moving almost directly from the womb to the tomb" (20, note 21). Indeed, it is implied that the lost boys are actually dead: "The term 'lost' is used frequently as a euphemism for 'dead,' as in 'he lost his father' or 'she lost a child.'" (44, note 18). Furthermore, Neverland bears a striking resemblance to the land of the dead in Irish mythology, as Tatar points out:

> Neverland may be modeled on Tír na nÓg, the most prominent of the Otherworlds in Irish mythology, and island that cannot be located on a map. Mortals can reach it only by invitation from one of the fairies residing on it. A place of eternal youth and beauty, it is a utopian land of music, pleasure, happiness, and eternal life. (20, note 21)

Similarly, the children can get into Neverland only when invited or accompanied by Peter. Furthermore, Sarah Gilead describes Neverland as a "realm of death under the cover of boyish and adventure," and goes so far as to compare their house to a graveyard: "[T]he boys live underground in houses that resemble coffins" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 20, note 21). From this follows that Peter Pan is in a very similar position to Saint Peter: he is the only one who grants access to the land of the dead. But, unlike Saint Peter, Peter Pan brings Wendy and her brothers back home, to the world of the living.

As any surname, Peter Pan's second name says even more about his origins than his first name. Judging from his surname, it is not surprising that Peter Pan partly owes his origin, or rather some of his characteristics, to the Greek god Pan, who is himself connected with Hermes, the trickster of Western mythology, although the nature of that connection is not very clear. In his book *The Greek Myths*, Robert Graves offers several possible versions of Pan's origins. According to some versions of the myth, Pan's father is Hermes: Karl Kerényi in *The Gods of the Greeks* and Maria Tatar in *The Annotated Peter Pan*, to name just two examples, name Hermes as the father of Pan. However, Graves argues that Pan was "Zeus's foster-brother, and therefore far older than Hermes" (102). Kerényi solves this problem by arguing that there was not one Pan, but several: "[E]ach generation of gods must have had its own Pan" (174).

Although Pan is not a typical trickster, he has quite a few important trickster features. One of the most important is the fact that, although he is a powerful god, he has "never been enrolled among the Olympian Twelve" (Graves 102), which means that he is definitely not part of the centre. Instead, he lives "on earth in rural Arcadia" (102), far from the Olympian centre of power. Pan's name has several possible meanings. According to Graves, it is derived from "*paein*, 'to pasture'" (103). Accordingly, Pan's

duty is to guard flocks, herds and bee-hives in the pastoral Arcadia (102). Furthermore, Kerényi points out the association of the name Pan with the word *pan*: "In our language *pan* means 'All', and the god was later indentified with the physical Universe—although his name, except for its sound, has nothing to do with this" (174).

Like Peter Pan, the god Pan is a betwixt and between. But whereas Peter Pan is half-human and half-bird, Pan is half-human and half-goat: "He is said to have been so ugly at birth, with horns, tail, and goat-legs, that his mother ran away from him in fear" (Graves 102). Goat is often associated with the devil and that is exactly what Pan stood for in the Arcadian fertility cult (102). Indeed, with his horns, tail and goat legs he bears a strong resemblance to the typical representation of the devil. Pan's connection to the devil lends him a more sinister aspect, which was then inherited by Peter Pan. In fact, Peter came to be associated with a goat, as well. He does not have any goat features like Pan; he simply rides a goat. The goat was given to him by Maimie, a very peculiar little girl who used to scare her brother every night with a monster with horns, bringing him into a state of panic every time, and then falling asleep like "the sweetest little angel" (Barrie, *The Little* 147):

> Tony entreated her not to do it to-night, and the mother and their coloured nurse threatened her, but Maimie merely smiled her agitating smile. And by-and-by when they were alone with their night-light she would start up in bed crying 'Hsh! what was that?' Tony beseeches her! 'It was nothing—don't, Maimie, don't!' and pulls the sheet over his head. 'It is coming nearer!' she cries; 'Oh, look at it, Tony! It is feeling your bed with its horns--it is boring for you, oh, Tony, oh!' and she desists not until he rushes downstairs in his combinations, screeching. (146-147)

It is remarkable how this scene evokes the powerful presence of the god Pan who is capable of inducing feelings of panic and terror: "The mythological Pan inspires terror through his association with excess, intoxication, and licentiousness" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 19, note 18). The toy goat Peter got from Maimie was then changed by

fairies into a real goat that he could ride. However, these "undisguised references to 'the chthnonic, often lascivious and far from child-like goat-god' were soon removed from the play and did not find their way into the novel" (Yeoman qtd. in Tatar, "Introduction" l).

The fact that Pan is half-human and half-animal shows his transitional character and his close connection to Nature. Not surprisingly then, he is also in charge of a smooth transition between night and day:[13] "At night he led the dance of the nymphs, and he also ushered in the morning and kept watch from the mountain summits" (Kerényi 175).

Although Pan is associated with the devil, he is definitely not evil. Like most tricksters, he is more ambiguous than that, which means that he is rather amoral than immoral: He can be "benign and destructive, delightful and terrifying" (Tatar, "Introduction" l). Indeed, Pan is able to engender utterly contradictory feelings: His music can be soothing and enlivening, "put[ting] a spirit of gladness in all hearts" (Stevenson qtd. in Perrot 159). On the other hand, "with his shrill discordant notes" (Perrot 159), he can strike "a panic terror" into the hearts of others, "of all the fears the most terrible, since in embraces all" (Stevenson qtd. in Perrot 159). In fact, Pan provoked such ambiguous reactions right after he was born – his mother was terrified, but the Olympian gods were delighted:

> [A] magic child was born, with goat's feet and goat's horns, crowing and laughing. When his mother had born him, she sprang up and fled, leaving none to suckle the child: so terrified was she when she saw its wild and bearded face. Hermes picked up his son, wrapped him in a hare's pelt and hastily brought him to Olympus. He sat down beside Zeus and the other gods, and introduced his son to them. The immortals were

[13] There is a beautifully lyrical depiction of Pan's ushering in the morning in Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*.

> delighted with the child—Dionysos most of all. They named him Pan because "all" had been pleased by him. (Kerényi 173-174)

Pan may look like a devil but, with his laughing and crowing, he utterly charms those around him.

In fact, crowing is another feature Peter has inherited from Pan and the meanings of the word *to crow* are particularly relevant here. According to Cambridge Dictionary, there are three meanings of the verb *crow*: First, it refers to "a very long and loud sharp cry" that a cock makes, which draws attention to the fact that Peter is half-bird. Second, it is used to describe "sudden cries of happiness" which babies make. Again, this interpretation is also possible in Peter's case because he is in fact a seven-day-old baby. Finally, *to crow* can also mean "to talk in a proud and annoying way about something you have done." This meaning is the most relevant for the analysis of Peter as a trickster figure and he, indeed, often crows when he brags about his achievements: '"How clever I am," he crowed rapturously, "oh, the cleverness of me!"' (Barrie, *Peter* 26). In fact, his rapturous crowing expresses his "narcissistic glee" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 40, note 12), implying both boasting and child's happiness.

Pan's personal characteristics are also typical of the trickster, such as a strong focus on satisfying his physical needs: "He was, on the whole, easygoing and lazy, loving nothing better than his afternoon sleep, and revenged himself on those who disturbed him with a sudden loud shout from a grove, or grotto, which made the hair bristle on their heads" (Graves 102). Furthermore, he has voracious appetites – sexual in particular – which is not surprising, considering the fact that Pan is a phallic god (Kerényi 174). He not only "seduced several nymphs," but he also "boasted that he had coupled with all Dionysus's drunken Maenads" (Graves 102). The chaste nymph Pitys even had to change into a fir-tree to escape his urgent sexual desire. This is one aspect

in which Peter Pan differs from the god Pan: He has not inherited Pan's libido. This is largely due to the fact that he is a hero of children's literature and that he is a child himself. One cannot expect a seven-day-old baby chasing after women. Instead, Peter's greediness is directed at stories, which he loves listening to (Barrie, *The Annotated* 45-47).

Moreover, like many tricksters, Pan uses tricks, such as change of appearance, to get what he wants. When he wanted to seduce Selene, he disguised "his hairy black goatishness with well-washed white fleeces. Not realising who he was, Selene consented to ride on his back, and let him do as he pleased with her" (103). Even though this can be considered as shape-shifting only symbolically, it is an attempt to change one's identity by disguise, which is one of trickster's typical devices of deception and one that is frequently used by Peter Pan, as well. Moreover, deceiving Selene by disguise is not the only instance when Pan uses a devious trick to achieve what he wants. Indeed, Perrot points out that Pan "has been considered the master of deception, of double-dealing and double-talk" since Plato's Cratylus (162). This description of Pan brings to mind the "double-voiced" discourse of the African trickster Esu-Elegbara (Gates 7).

Furthermore, Pan is a bricoleur. In one of his sexual pursuits, this time of the chaste Syrinx, his object of desire changed into a reed. Since he could not distinguish her from the other reeds, he cut several of them and used them to make a Pan-pipe (103), also called *syrinx* (Kerényi 175), a musical instrument he uses to produce such hauntingly beautiful music. Again, this is one of the things Peter Pan inherited from his mythological godfather:

> Peter's heart was so glad that he felt he must sing all day long, just as the birds sing for joy, but, being partly human, he needed an instrument, so he made a pipe of reeds, and he used to sit by the shore of the island of an evening, practising the sough of the wind and the ripple of the water, and catching handfuls of the shine of the moon, and he put

> them all in his pipe and played them so beautifully that even the birds were deceived, and they would say to each other, 'Was that a fish leaping in the water or was it Peter playing leaping fish on his pipe?' And sometimes he played the birth of birds, and then the mothers would turn round in their nests to see whether they had laid an egg. (Barrie, *The Little* 117)

This beautifully lyrical passage also shows how supremely skilful Peter is at imitation, which is another important skill that belongs to the repertoire of the trickster. Moreover, Peter's pipe playing shows his boundless creativity: Tatar describes it as "a form of artistry so real that it pulsates with procreative energy" ("An Introduction" 242). Imitation and creation may seem to be two mutually exclusive concepts, but they are somehow reconciled in the figure of Peter Pan, supporting his role of the trickster. His imitative creativity is not limited to natural phenomena. Indeed, Peter is able to compose a lullaby based on the way his mother calls him: "Sitting on the foot of the bed, he played a beautiful lullaby to his mother on his pipe. He had made it up himself out of the way she said 'Peter,' and he never stopped playing until she looked happy" (Barrie, *The Little* 141). He is even able to play his mother's kiss: "Twice he came back from the window, wanting to kiss his mother, but he feared the delight of it might waken her, so at last he played her a lovely kiss on his pipe, and then flew back to the Gardens" (142). As a trickster, Peter also uses his imitation skills for deception: he faithfully imitates the voice of Hook to deceive the pirates and save Tiger Lilly (Barrie, *The Annotated* 98-99); he successfully imitates the ticking sound of the crocodile "so that wild beasts should believe he was the crocodile and let him pass unmolested" (155) and, as positive side effect, manages to scare Hook out of his wits (153); and he impersonates Wendy at one point when she was captured by the pirates, thus, symbolically, changing his sex, as well (161). Moreover, Peter is also a bricoleur, a quality which is inherently connected with creativity: in the episode where Peter and

Wendy get stuck in the lagoon when the dangerous tide is approaching, Peter sees the flying kite and it immediately occurs to him how it can be used to save Wendy. Later, when the Neverbird saves him by giving him the nest with her eggs, Peter, again, does not fail to come up with a way to save the eggs, as well. He takes Starkey's hat that is hung on a stave on the rock, "a deep tarpaulin, watertight, with a broad brim" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 112) and puts the eggs into this hat. What is more, this new nest is even better than the traditional one so that "all Never birds now build in that shape of nest, with a broad brim on which the youngsters take an airing"[14] (Barrie, *Peter Pan* 103). In neither of these episodes, Peter creates something new, but his bricoleur ability consists in these cases in his creative use of the materials at hand to solve a problem.

Like many tricksters, Pan is not held in a particularly high regard by others, people or gods. However, this does not stop them from taking advantage of his abilities: "The Olympian gods, while despising Pan for his simplicity and love of riot, exploited his powers. Apollo wheedled the art of prophecy from him, and Hermes copied a pipe which he had let fall, claimed it as his own invention, and sold it to Apollo" (Graves 103). The Arcadians were no better because they took his help for granted. Pan was supposed to help "hunters to find their quarry" (102), but when he failed to do so, they were not afraid to punish him: "[T]he Arcadians paid him so little respect that, if ever they returned empty-handed after a long day's hunting, they dared scourge him with squills" (102). However, this does not mean that Pan was not popular among the Arcadians. Actually, "Pan is the only god who has died in our time" (103) and the way the Arcadians reacted to his death shows just how much they were fond of him. The news of Pan's death came to the sailor Thamus: "A divine voice shouted across the sea:

[14] Also, this episode shows that Peter is a culture hero to a certain extent. It is because of him that Neverbirds built their nests the way they do.

‘Thamus, are you there? When you reach Palodes, take care to proclaim that the great god Pan is dead!’, which Thamus did; and the news was greeted from the shore with groans and laments” (103). Similarly, Peter is actually a dead baby, a fact that will be elaborated later in the thesis.

Finally, as the boy who remains forever young, Peter Pan is connected with *puer aeternus*, the “eternal boy” (Tatar, “Introduction” xxxvii). In mythology, this term is used for describing a child god who remains forever young (Sharp) and he is “identified at various times with Dionysus (god of wine and ecstasy)[15] and with Eros (god of love and beauty)” (Tatar, “Introduction” xxxvii). In psychology, *puer aeternus* “refers to an older man whose emotional life has remained at an adolescent level, [which is] usually coupled with too great a dependence on the mother” (Sharp). That is why this term could be easily applied to Barrie, as well. After all, he was a boy trapped in a man’s body. He may not have been too dependent on his mother, but he was certainly devoted to her. Interestingly enough, the psychological profile of *puer aeternus* contains some of the core trickster qualities: “He covets independence and freedom, chafes at boundaries and limits, and tends to find any restriction intolerable” (Sharp). That may be one of the

[15] Accordingly, in the Nietzschean dichotomy of the Dionysian and the Apollonian, Peter Pan – and tricksters in general – come much closer to the Dionysian, which represents chaos, energy, “primordial creativity” and “joy in existence” (Wicks), Dionysus himself being associated with drunkenness, madness and ecstasy (Kreis). The Apollonian, trying to force “logical order and stiff sobriety” (Wicks), is rather what the trickster tries to disrupt. Correspondingly, Neverland, Peter’s home, is also much closer to the chaotic Dionysian than to the orderly Apollonian: Tatar describes it as “a site of disorder rather than aesthetic order” (Tatar, “Introduction” xl). Moreover, the Dionysian also has a similar function as the trickster, dissolving boundaries and oppositions and allowing people to submerge “in a greater whole” (Kreis). This function could have been especially important for the psychological wellbeing of people living in Victorian England, as Perrot points out: “[T]he image of Dionysus shows an unexpected interplay of primeval instincts, which are not governed by reason and have a healing effect on the modern mind entangled in contradictions” (156).

In C. G. Jung’s theory, the Nietzschean dichotomy roughly corresponds to the difference between *puer aeternus* and *senex*, his opposite: “The puer's shadow is the senex (Latin for ‘old man’), associated with the god Apollo—disciplined, controlled, responsible, rational, ordered. Conversely, the shadow of the senex is the puer, related to Dionysus—unbounded instinct, disorder, intoxication, whimsy” (Sharp).

reasons why the term is so suitable for describing both the trickster Peter Pan and his trickster-like author.

Peter Pan's name, then, is also a betwixt and between because it bridges a gap between two historically contradictory religions – Christianity, represented by Saint Peter, and paganism, symbolised by the Greek god Pan. Each of Peter Pan's godfathers, the apostle Simon Peter and the god Pan, lent him something of their trickster personalities: Just like Peter, both Saint Peter and the god Pan have profoundly ambiguous nature. Like Saint Peter, Peter Pan is a psychopomp, and like the god Pan, he is closely associated with nature, being half-animal. Further characteristics that Peter Pan and the god Pan have in common include deceiving based on disguise or imitation; a certain degree of bricoleur creativity; boasting and greediness, which in Pan's case is directed at sexual intercourse and in Peter's case at listening to stories; and, finally, the fact that they are both dead, which in Peter's case means that he will remain a child forever, never reaching adulthood.

2.3 Victorian Child: An Angel or an Animal?

Heaven lies about us in our infancy!

Shades of the prison-house begin to close

Upon the growing boy.

William Wordsworth, "Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood"

Victorian England was the "Golden Age" of children's literature[16] (Gubar). This should come as no surprise as one third of the population consisted of children: "Victoria's England was a child-dominated society. Throughout her long reign, one out of every three of her subjects was under the age of fifteen" (Gubar). That is why it is only logical that the perception and representation of the child became one of the central topics of Victorian literature. The topic is all the more interesting because of the fact that the situation of children in Victorian England was full of paradoxes. The fact that England was a child-dominated society sharply contrasts with the high death-rate of children: "Those who got through the critical early childhood period often had to watch helplessly as parents, siblings, and their own offspring were snatched away from them by disease" (Banerjee, "Frail"). Furthermore, the popularity of "the Romantic idea that children are innocent creatures who should be shielded from the adult world and allowed to enjoy their childhood" (Gubar) clashed with the grim reality of workhouses and the image of "ragged, stunted children crowd[ing] the city streets" (Gubar), which was the direct and unfortunate result of the growing industrialisation and child labour. The desperate situation of children sharply contrasting with the Romantic ideal inspired

[16] In fact, Peter Pan was just one of many literary characters of children's literature that were inspired by the god Pan in this period: "[T]he major watershed in nineteenth-century children's literature occurred with the introduction of a new type of character: the child-hero, inspired by the mythological figure of the Greek god Pan" (Perrot 155).

a wave of activism, calling for a reform. The activism was not without an effect: “Child mortality was decreasing by the end of the century, as a result of improved working and living conditions, public health measures such as vaccination, and better medical treatment” (Banerjee, “Child”). In fact, even some novels played a significant role in this respect, helping to pass important reforms: “For example, the cruelty which brings Tom to the water's edge in The Water-Babies pricked the general conscience so painfully that the Chimney Sweepers’ Regulation Act, which prohibited the employment of children for this purpose, went through within the year” (Banerjee, “Child”).

The artistic obsession with children was not limited to literature; it is also apparent in the paintings of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. In fact, “there was an explosion of books, magazines, toys, and games aimed at entertaining children” (Gubar). However, the entertainment of children was not the only purpose of these works. Gradually, the cult of the child emerged from this devotion to children, and it became apparent that the adults got a fair share of entertainment, too, as Ernest Dowson argued in his essay “The Cult of the Child:”

> “Disillusioned” grown-ups, tired of facing the complexities of contemporary life, find relief by turning their attention to children: “[T]here are an ever increasing number of people who receive from the beauty of childhood, in art as in life, an exquisite pleasure.” Dowson and other members of the “cult” insisted that contemplating the innocent simplicity of children served as a healthy corrective to the tawdriness and skepticism of modern life. (Gubar)

Rose’s critique of the disturbing presence of the adult agency children’s literature, described earlier in the thesis, is particularly relevant here. Together with the entertaining function described above, it especially found expression in the literary stream which presented children as adorable little angels.

Actually, the perception and representation of children in Victorian England was profoundly ambiguous. In her essay "Angelic, Atavistic, Human: The Child of the Victorian Period," Naomi Wood describes the radically different depictions of the child in Victorian England. More specifically, there are two literary streams which are diametrically opposed. On the one hand, children were seen as "angels on earth sent by heaven to be models of innocence and purity" (Wood 116). In this perception, children were far superior to adults, serving as models of virtue for them and edifying them morally and spiritually, while resisting their corrupting influence: "For some Victorian writers, the child was an angelic emblem both of uncorrupted nature and of spiritual truth beyond the material. This imagined child was figured as immune to the corrupting influences of the adult world – but only to a point" (116). Indeed, adults were seen as corrupted by the world around them and there was an implied threat that they could contaminate the purity of children. It is true that children were considered immune to the corrupting influence of adults, but childhood does not last forever and children could be corrupted in the end, when the protecting shield of childhood ceases to work and they become adults themselves. That is, unless they somehow avoid reaching adulthood. That is why the death of children was often glorified because it was seen as a way of sealing off their innocence: "Since childhood is a transitory state to adulthood, the pure child's death was often celebrated as it preserved the child's innocence and inspired adults with thoughts of heaven and an afterlife where that innocence could be preserved" (117). Gradually, the image of the child was inflated into a saviour and a Christ-like figure (117), with children being depicted as "holy innocents dying for the benefits of guilty adults around them" (119). Not surprisingly, some commentators went so far as to suggest that "the child replaced God as an object of worship" (Gubar).

On the other hand, “the idealized child of the Victorian era made it possible for adults to discover the demon in children, for the increasing investment in toys, clothes, education, and care could easily backfire when children did not live up perfectly to the expectations of innocent beauty” (Barrie, *The Annotated* 48, note 26). That is why, alongside the view of children as innocent angels, there also was an entirely opposite view, in which children were denied their humanity, being compared to animals which had to be tamed and restrained by the superior adults until they finally fit the existing social structures and obeyed all the rules: “Other writers figured children as primitive pre-humans who needed to be moulded through education and experience into beings acceptable, and accepting of, society’s norms of gender and class expectation” (Wood 116). The language of some writers was permeated with tropes of colonialism, comparing children to savages: “Sarah Thompson notes that ‘artlessness and barbarous spontaneity is the domain of the child which like other “savages” must be tamed and controlled for its own good by a colonizing power’” (120). Indeed, a lot of Victorians gave credence to the “Law of Recapitulation,” which “stipulated that as a child develops, he or she repeats the stages of development of the human race” (Gubar). Accordingly, the indigenous people of the colonised countries were compared to children and considered barbarous. That is why Victorians felt justified in their inhuman treatment of children and indigenous people: “This belief in ‘the savagery of all children and the childishness of all savages’ served [as a] justification for subjecting children to harsh discipline, and natives of other countries to the rule of the expanding British Empire” (Gubar).

Writers such as Charles Dickens, Charlotte Brontë or George Eliot criticised this dehumanisation of children, showing the terrible effect it had on them:

> The children in these realist texts are not the transcendent angel-children influencing for the better the adults around them; they are constrained, warped, and trained against their natural inclinations to suit the structures of a culture more interested in replicating itself than caring for an individual's happiness. Realists thus reproduced and critiqued the cultural 'othering' of children, showing the alienating consequences of defining children as objects to be moulded or wild animals to be domesticated. (Wood 123)

One can see how a society like this was in a dire need of the trickster who would disrupt the social constrains which stifle the natural liveliness, spontaneity and creativity of children and effectively root out any signs of individuality. In fact, Wood describes how Lewis Carroll tried to disrupt these opposing images of the child in his novel *Alice in Wonderland*, in which Alice is "a synthesis of these idealizing and realistic constructions" (116). Carroll managed to blur the divide between the two opposing constructions and to deconstruct the social categories: He "locates the conflict in the realms of language and power. By making nonsense of the abstract and reductive categories through which children were defined, Carroll's work celebrates and problematizes the Victorian cult of childhood" (116). Similarly, the trickster-like Barrie manages to disrupt the established representations of the child, but in a different way – specifically, by disputing both the idea of children's perfect innocence and of their animality. As Tatar points out, whereas "Lewis Carroll's Alice is sweet, well mannered, and innocent, J. M. Barrie's Peter Pan is, by contrast, self-centered, impertinent, and pleasure-seeking" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 48, note 26). At the same time, however, he has all the prerequisites for being the perfect Victorian model of innocence.

First of all, Peter Pan is a seven-day-old baby that will never grow up and hence be stained by the vices of adulthood. The reason why he will never grow up is the fact that Peter is a dead baby:

> Peter Pan is, in some ways, a compensatory dream child for all the boys who have fallen out of perambulators. He was once a dead baby, but he is also a fantasy child, as

> J. M. Barrie acknowledged, in an autograph addition for the second draft of the ending of the 1908 play: "I think now—that Peter is only a sort of dead baby—he is the baby of all the people who never had one." Mrs. Darling also discerns Peter in the features of women who have never had children. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 44, note 18)

The fact that Peter does not grow up indeed strongly suggests that he is a dead baby because, usually, what does not change is dead. If this statement is reversed, it sounds even more relevant to the perception of the Victorian child: "The dead child […] is destined not to change" (Ferrucci 119). This means that the child should remain innocent forever. According to the Victorian perception of children, then, Peter Pan should be the ultimate model of innocence: he is a baby, hence innocent, and his innocence is confirmed and protected by the fact that he is dead because he will never grow up and be spoiled by the corrupt world around him. However, Peter is far from being innocent, or at least, from the concept of innocence that Victorians had in mind.

As was noted earlier, Peter is connected with the devil (through his affinity with the god Pan). Furthermore, Andrew Birkin speaks about "the Devil in Peter" (qtd. in Tatar, "A Note" xxiv); Mr. Darling calls him a "fiend" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 27) after he kidnaps the children; and Barrie even identifies him as the villain of the story in his first draft of the play: "P[eter] a demon boy (villain of the story)" (59, note 11). Indeed, the character of Hook was introduced for purely practical reasons – specifically, for a scene which was designed to "give the stagehands time to change the scenery" (59, note 11). Peter, indeed, has a rather ominous aspect. This is supported by the fact that he only comes to the nursery when the night-lights, which are supposed to protect the children, have gone out: "They were awfully nice little night-lights, and one cannot help wishing that they could have kept awake to see Peter; but Wendy's light blinked and gave such a yawn that the other two yawned also, and before they could close their mouths all the three went out" (36). It is at this moment that first Tinker Bell and then

Peter come to the nursery. This episode may seem insignificant at first, but it gains in importance when connected to the dialogue between Michael and Mrs. Darling that preceded it. In this dialogue, the protective function of the night-lights is expressed: "'Can anything harm us, mother, after the night-lights are lit?' 'Nothing, precious,' she said; 'they are the eyes a mother leaves behind her to guard her children.'" (34). The implied menace of Peter's and Tinker Bell's visit is further supported by the folklore: "In traditional lore, fairies are associated with the practice of stealing human children, and Peter and Tinker Bell might be seen as co-conspirators as they enter the Darling home" (43, note 17). However, Peter does not come to the nursery to steal the children. The primary purpose of his visit is to listen to stories (45). Nevertheless, this changes after he finds out that Wendy knows a lot of stories. It is then that the thought of taking her with him occurs to him and the ominous aspect of his character emerges:

> "Don't go Peter," she entreated, "I know such lots of stories." Those were her precise words, so there can be no denying that it was she who first tempted him. He came back, and there was a greedy look in his eyes now which ought to have alarmed her, but did not. "Oh, the stories I could tell to the boys!" she cried, and then Peter gripped her and began to draw her toward the window. (45-47)

Actually, Peter's ominous nature is only implied. He does not take Wendy to Neverland against her will. Instead, he tries to seduce her into going with him: he promises her to teach her to fly or to show her mermaids. As a true trickster, he uses his cleverness instead of violence to achieve what he wants. That is why he craftily appeals to her maternal instincts:

> He had become *frightfully cunning*. "Wendy," he said, "how we should all respect you." She was wriggling her body in distress. It was quite as if she were trying to remain on the nursery floor. But he had no pity for her. "Wendy," he said, *the sly one*, "you could tuck us in at night." "Oo!" "None of us has ever been tucked in at night." "Oo," and her arms went out to him. "And you could darn our clothes,

> and make pockets for us. None of us has any pockets." How could she resist. (47, emphasis added)

Here, Peter's cunningness lies in his ability to identify Wendy's weakness and using it to his advantage, specifically the easiness with which she succumbs to her maternal instincts. The fact that Wendy is "wriggling her body" as a reaction to Peter's verbal seduction implies hidden sexuality, evoking Peter's association with the god Pan. However, the implication is purely symbolic because Peter's seduction is in sharp contrasts with the innocent chores he seduces Wendy with, such as tucking the children in at night or darning their clothes.[17] Actually, this contrast has quite a humorous effect. Furthermore, the fact that the narrator calls Peter "the sly one" for seducing Wendy with these completely innocent household chores provides yet another humorous contrast, implying at the same time his deceitful nature. On the whole, this scene evokes the image of Peter as "a Pied Piper figure, seducing the children, in this case, with the promise of flight and leading them out of their homes into an enchanted retreat" (52, note 33).

The image of children as adorable innocent angels is further subverted by Barrie's repeated implications of their heartlessness and selfishness, often combined with craftiness. The deviousness of Darling's children is apparent in the scene before their escape, when Liza comes to check on them, forced by Nana's distressful barking. First, the children are alerted by Peter and their faces assume "the awful craftiness of children listening for sounds from the grown-up world" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 48). Immediately, they begin to pretend they are the sweet little angels everybody assumes them to be: "And thus when Liza entered, holding Nana, the nursery seemed quite its old self, very dark; and you would have sworn you heard its three wicked inmates

[17] Actually, Peter does not really understand the notion of sexual attraction (Barrie, *The Annotated* 80, note 1), which is implied by the fact that he does not know what a kiss is (41).

breathing angelically as they slept. They were really doing it artfully from behind the window curtains" (48). Barrie's subversion of the supposed innocence of children is emphasised here by putting the contrasting words "wicked" and "angelically" close to each other. Moreover, Lisa, deceived by their pretence, supports this assumption by calling them "little angels" (48) in the face of the disgraced Nana. Moreover, sometimes the narrator is not so subtle in expressing children's heartlessness (128, note 4), as the following excerpt shows: "They knew *in what they called their hearts* that one can get on quite well without a mother, and that it is only the mothers who think you can't" (128, emphasis added). The following passage provides another example of the narrator's scathing criticism: "'Peter, can we go?' they all cried imploringly. They took it for granted that if they went he would go also, but really they scarcely cared. Thus children are ever ready, when novelty knocks, to desert their dearest ones" (130). Tatar comments on his passage, pointing out its clash with Victorian ideas: "Rather than being innocents, healers, or agents of hope, children are seen as egocentric and unable to form lasting bonds. Barrie broke with Wordsworth's view of children as those who bring 'hope' with their 'forward-looking thoughts.'" (131, note 10). Heartlessness indeed seems to be an inherent characteristic of children, granting them also the ability to fly, together with their gayness and innocence:

> "Why can't you fly, mother?" "Because I am grown up, dearest. When people grow up they forget the way." "Why do they forget the way?" "Because they are no longer gay and innocent and heartless. It is only the gay and innocent and heartless who can fly." "What is gay and innocent and heartless? I do wish I was gay and innocent and heartless." (182)

These three characteristics seems to be indeed the essential characteristics of children in Barrie's view, considering the fact that they are repeated four times in the passage above. In fact, they are repeated again at the end of the novel – these are the very words

that the novel is concluded with, emphasising their importance (187). Tatar, commenting on this, recognised Barrie's importance in his representation of children:

> With the addition of the term *heartless*, Barrie captured a change in the cultural understanding of childhood. The Victorian cult of the innocent child had done a real disservice by idealizing boys and girls, swaddling them in a serenity that denied their bright energy, their instinct for play, and their bolting curiosity. [...] Barrie, by contrast, introduced the idea of lightness and lack of gravity, uncorking the energy of children everywhere. His children can fly, and while they may be characterized by a form of flightiness and the inability to care and commit, they have finally been liberated from the pedestal on which they had been required to sit obediently still. (187, note 17)

Barrie proved to be a truly trickster-like character in setting children free and liberating them from the stifling social constraints of Victorian England.

Another sign of Peter's heartlessness is his reaction to Wendy's apparent death; he is not sad, just uneasy, wishing to be somewhere else, not in the presence of a dead body: "'She is dead,' he said uncomfortably. 'Perhaps she is frightened at being dead.' He thought of hopping off in a comic sort of way till he was out of sight of her, and then never going near the spot any more. They would all have been glad to follow if he had done this" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 80). The fact that the concept of death is uncomfortable for Peter stands in stark contrast with his function of a psychopomp, providing yet another example how contradictory notions are contained in the figure of a trickster. Furthermore, this episode shows Peter's inability to form emotional attachments, which is another typical sign of the trickster: "Once again, we see that Peter cannot be touched (in the sense of moved emotionally) by those around him" (80, note 1).

Peter's heartlessness may partly result from his egotism: He usually does not care much for others and only thinks about his amusement, not minding the fact that he

puts others in danger. This is most evident in the episode where the children are flying to Neverland:

> Certainly they did not pretend to be sleepy, they were sleepy; and that was a danger, for the moment they popped off, down they fell. The awful thing was that Peter thought this funny. "There he goes again!" he would cry gleefully, as Michael suddenly dropped like a stone. "Save him, save him!" cried Wendy, looking with horror at the cruel sea far below. Eventually, Peter would dive through the air, and catch Michael just before he could strike the sea, and it was lovely the way he did it; but he always waited till the last moment, and you felt it was his cleverness that interested him and not the saving of human life. Also he was fond of variety, and the sport that engrossed him one moment would suddenly cease to engage him, so there was always the possibility that the next time you fell he would let you go. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 54)

Indeed, Peter could let somebody die out of boredom. Or rather, having already tested his abilities to his satisfaction, he would not save Michael just because there is nothing in it for him anymore. He has had fun and demonstrated his cleverness, and so, now, he wants to move on because saving the tired children from dying in the sea is not entertaining enough anymore. Peter, as any trickster, is not a reliable companion for situations like the one mentioned above – not only because of his egotism, but also because of his capricious nature and resistance to emotional attachments.

With his egotism is inherently connected his incredible conceit. Indeed, Peter could by no means pass as a model of modesty. This is particularly evident in the episode where Peter tries to attach his shadow back to his body, but with no success. Wendy helps him and sews it back to him, but, when he sees the result, he is so happy that he forgets that Wendy was the one who did it, and automatically assumes it was him: Peter "was now jumping about in the wildest glee. Alas, he had already forgotten that he owed his bliss to Wendy. He thought he had attached the shadow himself. "How clever I am!" he crowed rapturously, "oh, the cleverness if me!" (Barrie, *The Annotated*

40). Peter's boasting is enough to make his cockiness[18] apparent, but the narrator's comment underscores it even further: "It was humiliating to have to confess that this conceit of Peter was one of his most fascinating qualities. To put it with brutal frankness, there never was a cockier boy" (40). His narcissism is further evident in the way he is responsive to praise. When Wendy sees Peter fly for the first time, she exclaims "How sweet!" (49). On hearing this, Peter euphorically exclaims: "Yes, I'm sweet, oh, I am sweet!"[19] (49). As is the case with many other tricksters, Peter's cockiness sometimes gets him into trouble. Indeed, he is so conceited that it often makes him look foolish because it completely clouds his judgement; he never misses a chance to boast about how great he is even if this brings him (and the other children) in danger. In one episode, Peter cleverly deceives the pirates by faithfully imitating the voice of Hook, but then spoils everything when he lets himself be easily persuaded to play a guessing game, during which he reveals his name: "'Can't guess, can't guess,' crowed Peter. 'Do you give it up?' Of course in his pride he was carrying the game too far, and the miscreants saw their chance. 'Yes, yes,' they answered eagerly. 'Well, then,' he cried, 'I am Peter Pan.'" (103).

On the other hand, there comes a moment later in the story where Peter shows some strong emotions and that is when he has to part with Wendy who, on her part, is quite inconsiderate and acts as if she did not care about what Peter feels:

> If she did not mind the parting, he was going to show her, was Peter, that neither did he. But of course he cared very much; and he was so full of wrath against grown-ups, who,

[18] Peter's extreme cockiness is also the reason why Hook hates him so much, as Tatar points out: "When Hook encounters the sleeping Peter Pan, it is, once again, his 'cockiness' that drives Hook into a homicidal frenzy" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 136, note 3).

[19] This structure, in which Peter repeats the praising words while putting the admiring "oh" between the two sentences appears once more in the novel: "Am I not a wonder, oh, I am a wonder!" (100). Indeed, his cockiness knows no bounds, which is why it often makes him look ridiculous. The narrator rightly comments on his character by saying that he was "tingling with life and also top-heavy with conceit" (100).

> as usual, were spoiling everything, that as soon as he got inside his tree he breathed intentionally quick short breaths at the rate of about five to a second. He did this because there is a saying in the Neverland that, every time you breathe, a grown-up dies; and Peter was killing them off vindictively as fast as possible. (128)

The question is whether these feelings are evidence of genuine affection that Peter feels toward Wendy or whether they are motivated by his selfishness. After all, parting with Wendy means parting with the stories she tells them, and it is the stories which are the main object of his greediness. The answer is probably the combination of both. It is true that Peter is deeply egocentric. But, at the same time, Wendy proves to be an exception to his overall resistance to emotional attachments – she is the only one whom Peter does not forget, which is demonstrated by the fact that he keeps going back to her even after she leaves Neverland. The fact that Wendy does not take Peter's feelings into consideration when she decides to leave is explained by the fact that she automatically assumes that he will go with her. When she finds out that that is not the case, she is crushed. Peter, however, apparently does not care and the word "heartless" appears again in the description of his behaviour: "To show that her departure would leave him unmoved, he skipped up and down the room, playing gaily on his heartless pipes" (131).

Peter's selfishness outweighs his affection for Wendy at the moment when he wants to bar the window of Wendy's home to trick her into thinking that her mother has forgotten her: "'Quick, Tink," he whispered, 'close the window; bar it. That's right. Now you and I must get away by the door; and when Wendy comes she will think her mother has barred her out; and she will have to go back with me.'" (171). His selfishness and deviousness reaches a peak in this episode, not only because of the cruelty of that act, but also because of the fact that Peter does not act on a whim; this has been his plan all along (172). Moreover, he feels no qualms of conscience about his misdeed. On the contrary, he is surprisingly cheerful: "Instead of feeling that he was

behaving badly he danced with glee" (172). His maliciousness is further demonstrated by what he exclaims when he sees Wendy's mother playing a mournful melody: "[H]e cried exultantly, 'You will never see Wendy again, lady, for the window is barred.'" (172). But, seeing her cry, he gradually relents and unbars the window, showing that he is capable of feeling compassion.

The heartlessness described so far is not limited to the story. In his introduction to the play, Barrie implies the heartless carelessness of the Llewelyn Davies boys in their treatment of the play, which is typical for children's treatment of toys: "You had played it until you tired of it, and tossed it in the air and gored it and left it derelict in the mud and went on your way singing other songs; and then I stole back and sewed back and sewed some of the gory fragments together with a pen-nib" ("To the Five" 216). Again, the children are depicted here as little monsters or wild animals (an image, which is supported by the verb "gore"), and it is the adult, who shows compassion and plays the role of a doctor to the victim of their heartless play.

However, Barrie's subversion of the view of children as innocent angels does not mean that he is an advocate of the opposite view. No, the trickster-like Barrie manages to subvert even the opposite – the animalistic – view of children claiming that children have to be moulded out of their instinctive animal nature into humanity. The agents of this transformation of children, those who are solely responsible for changing them into proper humans, are, of course, adults.

As noted earlier, Peter has a liminal status, being half-animal and half-human, and so he is a perfect object for testing the above mentioned view – even more so, because he grows up without parents and without any adult supervision in general. When he is seven days old, he leaves his mother and starts living on his own in the Kensington Gardens. That is why he cannot attain the status of being fully human: "His

age is one week, and though he was born so long ago he has never had a birthday, nor is there the slightest chance of his ever having one. The reason is that he escaped from being human when he was seven days old; he escaped by the window and flew back to the Kensington Gardens" (Barrie, *The Little* 109-110).

Peter's escape may have started as a result of "a youthful desire to return to the tree-tops" (Barrie, *The Little* 110), which is natural for all new-born children in the Peter Pan mythology, but, in his case, the desire to be free as a bird persisted. He wanted to come back eventually, but this desire was always holding him back, which is evident in the following passage:

> But why does Peter sit so long on the rail; why does he not tell his mother that he has come back? I quite shrink from the truth, which is that he sat there in two minds. Sometimes he looked longingly at his mother, and sometimes he looked longingly at the window. Certainly it would be pleasant to be her boy again, but on the other hand, what times those had been in the Gardens! Was he so sure that he should enjoy wearing clothes again? (140-141)

Peter is, indeed, on the horns of a dilemma: he loves his mother and he wants to come back to her, but the price is too high. He would have to give up his freedom and he would have to conform to social norms and conventions, such as wearing clothes that he may not like. And freedom is essential for the trickster (and unwillingness to conform is yet another typical trickster characteristic). But freedom comes at a price. Peter delays his return so long that, in the end, it is too late. His unwillingness to go back is shown in the following passage:

> Many nights, and even months, passed before he asked fairies for his second wish; and I am not sure that I quite know why he delayed so long. One reason was that he had so many good-byes to say, not only to his particular friends, but to a hundred favourite spots. Then he had his last sail, and his very last sail, and his last sail of all, and so on. [...] and another comfortable reason was that, after all, there was no hurry, for his mother would never weary of waiting for him. (142)

Yet his mother did run out of patience or hope in the end. And when, finally, Peter flies to the window, he finds it closed with "iron bars on it, and peering inside he saw his mother sleeping peacefully with her arm round another little boy" (143). The iron bars support the suggestion of a lack of freedom, comparing home to a prison, "a place of limited mobility and magic, too confined and narrow to contain the expansive desires of children as they grow up" (Tatar, "An Introduction" 244). Indeed, home means confinement, imposing limits on the child which are often a source of frustration. Not surprisingly, this is no place for a trickster. Nevertheless, giving up home also means that Peter is forever excluded from the domestic bliss other children can enjoy, which is demonstrated in the scene where Wendy, Michael and John are reunited with their parents:

> "George, George," [Mrs. Darling] cried when she could speak; and Mr. Darling woke to share her bliss, and Nana came rushing in. There could not have been a lovelier sight; but there was none to see it except a strange boy who was starring in at the window. He had ecstasies innumerable that other children can never know; but he was looking through the window at the one joy from which he must be for ever barred. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 174)

Peter may feel sorry for not being able to share their bliss, but he realises the drawbacks of having a home and decides that they are not worth the benefits. That is why he refuses Mrs. Darling's offer and with that he gives up his second chance to have a home and a mother:

> She told Peter that she had adopted all the other boys, and would like to adopt him also. "Would you send me to school?" he inquired craftily. "Yes." "And then to an office?" "I suppose so." "Soon I should be a man?" "Very soon." "I don't want to go to school and learn solemn things," he told her passionately. "I don't want to be a man. O Wendy's mother, if I was to wake up and feel there was a beard!" "Peter," said Wendy the comforter, "I should love you in a beard"; and Mrs. Darling stretched out her arms to him, but he repulsed her. "Keep back, lady, no one is going to catch me and make me a man." (177)

In other words, Peter refuses to be gradually moulded into an ordinary man leading an ordinary life, enjoying the domestic bliss, but giving up on adventure. Instead, he chooses to be alone and free, not being bound to any home or family.

What is more, not only that Peter has no mother or family, he actually does not belong anywhere because he is neither a bird, nor a human. This fact comes to light in his conversation with Solomon Caw:[20]

> "I suppose," said Peter huskily, "I suppose I can still fly?" You see, he had lost faith. "Poor little half-and-half!" said Solomon, who was not really hard-hearted, "you will never be able to fly again, not even on windy days. You must live here on the island always." […] He promised very kindly, however, to teach Peter as many of the bird ways as could be learned by one of such an awkward shape. "Then I shan't be exactly a human?" Peter asked. "No." "Nor exactly a bird?" "No." "What shall I be?" "You will be a Betwixt-and-Between," Solomon said, and certainly he was a wise old fellow, for that is exactly how it turned out. (Barrie, *The Little* 115)

Indeed, as any true trickster, Peter is the ultimate outsider: "This is the great tragedy of Peter Pan. He never really has a home, never really has a mother, and belongs neither to the world of birds nor to the world of humans. The gift of eternal youth turns him into a homeless wanderer" (Tatar, "An Introduction" 241).

In *Peter and Wendy*, it is Mrs. Darling who is the main agent of moulding the children into responsible beings who conform to social norms, trimming the characteristics which do not fit the pattern. This is evident in the episode where she tidies up the children's minds:

> Mrs. Darling first heard of Peter when she was tidying up her children's minds. It is the nightly custom of every good mother after her children are asleep to rummage in their minds and put things straight for next morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. […] It is quite like tidying up drawers. You would see her on her knees, I expect, lingering humorously over some of your contents, wondering where on earth you had picked this thing up, making

[20] Peter's liminal status is apparent in Arthur Rackham's painting "Peter put his strange case before old Solomon Caw" (see fig. 1 in the Appendix), in which Peter perches on a branch like a bird.

> discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to her cheek as if it were as nice as a kitten, and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. When you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind; and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 17-18)

From this lovely description, tidying up children's minds may seem as an innocent and beneficial activity at first – right up to the point where Mrs. Darling starts to put out of sight the things she does not like and find appropriate: all the bad characteristics and "evil passions" have to be hidden somewhere in the deep recesses of the mind, no doubt giving rise to neuroses later in the adulthood, as Freud would have it.

In fact, Mrs. Darling's efforts sharply contrast with what Peter Pan does when he is looking for his shadow: "Peter jumped at the drawers, scattering their contents to the floor with both hands, as kings toss ha'pence to the crowd" (38). Tatar's note about this passage is especially relevant when talking about Peter as the trickster: "If Mrs. Darling tidies up the metaphorical chests of drawers that are the children's minds, Peter Pan flings the contents of the real chest of drawers in the nursery to the ground, creating disorderly clutter" (38, note 6). Indeed, the passage cited above symbolically expresses Peter's function of a trickster who messes up the order and embraces chaos.

The Victorian advocates of the animalistic view of children would no doubt approve of Mrs. Darling's method and see it as a way of eliminating the animality of children and moulding them into proper human beings. This is what Barrie subverts with his character of Peter Pan. It is true that Peter is basically half-animal, symbolising perhaps the supposed animality of children, but he does not behave like one. Certainly, he has many negative characteristics that Victorian parents would be only too happy to eliminate, but he is not wild or barbarous, and he is not dehumanised in any way. Indeed, he does not even come close to the Victorian idea of savages. On the contrary,

despite the fact that he lives without any adult supervision, he sometimes shows a very chivalrous behaviour, as in the episode where he lets Wendy fly off on the kite whereas he himself stays in the lagoon expecting to be drowned by the rising water:

> "Michael's kite," Peter said without interest, but next moment he had seized the tail, and was pulling the kite toward him. "It lifted Michael off the ground," he cried; "why should it not carry you?" "Both of us!" "It can't lift two; Michael and Curly tried." "Let us draw lots," Wendy said bravely. "*And you a lady; never*." Already he had tied the tail round her. She clung to him; she refused to go without him; but with a "Good-bye, Wendy," he pushed her from the rock; and in a few minutes she was borne out of his sight. Peter was alone on the lagoon. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 107, emphasis added)

This is not the only place in the story where Peter behaves like a true gentleman. In the final fight with Hook, Peter does not seize the chance to kill him easily when Hook drops his sword "at the sight of his own blood" (163). Instead, he invites him to pick it up before they continue to fight. His behaviour here is in contrast with the other boys who encourage Peter to seize the chance and kill Hook when he is defenceless. This contrast underscores Peter's integrity which is apparent in this particular case (but which is in no way consistent): "[T]he sword fell from Hook's hand, and he was at Peter's mercy. 'Now!' cried all the boys, but with a magnificent gesture Peter invited his opponent to pick up his own sword. Hook did so instantly, but with a tragic feeling that Peter was showing good form" (163). In the passages quoted above, Peter could indeed pass as a model of honesty and virtue (if his other not so virtuous qualities were to be ignored). More importantly, he did not need any adults to teach him this. Indeed, his honourable behaviour is not a result of a transformation an adult has effected. Instead, Peter seems to imitate the heroes of the stories he likes so much. He seems to have internalised a moral code based on the stories Wendy told him, which means that no adult was needed.

With Peter Pan, Barrie managed to subvert both the principal Victorian streams of thought about what is the nature of children. Peter is definitely not an innocent angel despite the fact that he is a dead baby who will never grow up and be spoiled by the corrupt world of adults; he has quite a few negative qualities already, with heartlessness and selfishness being seen as a quality which all children share. But he is neither a wild savage in spite of the fact that he lives without the edifying influence of adults. In this way, Barrie deconstructed these opposing views and showed that children are much more complex than that: they are neither sweet angels nor wild animals even though they may look like that sometimes. In fact, by subverting the image of children as animals by behaving in a very chivalrous way, Peter had to show some very untricksterish traits, demonstrating the fact that the specific characteristics of every trickster are influenced by his cultural context.

2.4 Neverland: The Place where Dreams Come True

When exploring the character of Peter Pan, one must not forget to consider Neverland, the only home that Peter will ever have. As was established, Peter is a trickster and a child, and the focus of this chapter is to show that Neverland is a perfect place for both tricksters and children, and to explore the connection between the two.

There are two reasons why Neverland is an ideal place for children. First, it is a place created by them because it is a kind of psychological landscape, "with external conflicts often mirroring or refracting psychological processes" (Tatar, "Introduction" xxxix). It is here that the products of their imagination come to life:[21]

> Strange to say, they all recognised [the island] at once, and until fear fell upon them they hailed it, not as something long dreamt of and seen at last, but as a familiar friend to whom they were returning home for the holidays. "John, there's the lagoon." "Wendy, look at the turtles burying their eggs in the sand." "I say, John, I see your flamingo with the broken leg!" "Look, Michael, there's your cave!" "John, what's that in the brushwood?" "It's a wolf with whelps. Wendy, I do believe that's your little whelp!" "There's my boat, John, with her sides stove in!" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 57)

Indeed, children are the creators of the things and animals in Neverland, and so they are, in a sense, also culture heroes. Nevertheless, if one should identify the main culture hero in the context of Neverland, it must be Peter – because of his transformative influence. Indeed, Neverland changes its character according to Peter's presence or absence. During his absence it is rather passive, but as he approaches, it comes back to life:

> Feeling that Peter was on his way back, the Neverland had again woke into life. We ought to use the pluperfect and say wakened, but woke is better and was always used by Peter. In his absence things are usually quiet on the island. [...] But with the coming of

[21] The fact that Neverland is basically created by the minds of children is also the reason why Peter Pan is able to get into children's dreams: "While [Wendy] slept she had a dream. She dreamt that the Neverland had come too near and that a strange boy had broken through from it. He did not alarm her, for she thought she had seen him before in the faces of women who have no children" (Barrie, *Peter* 10).

> Peter, who hates lethargy, they are under way again: if you put your ear to the ground now, you would hear the whole island seething with life (Barrie, *The Annotated* 64).

Apart from demonstrating Peter's transformative influence, this passage also shows that grammar rules do not apply here either. Furthermore, Peter also named the birds (and probably other animals, too) living in Neverland, which further supports his role of a culture hero:[22] "He regretted now that he had given the birds of the island such strange names that they are wild and difficult of approach" (145).

The second reason why the children feel so comfortable and happy in Neverland is the fact that it is a sort of playground where they are free to follow their natural inclinations without the disturbing presence of adults. Moreover, in Neverland, the laws of logic and natural laws in general do not apply, which means that the children are not limited by them:

> Neverland is presented in all its glorious variety—liberated from the tyranny of adult efforts (like those of Mrs. Darling, who "puts things straight" every night int he minds of her three children) to produce order. It gives us a higher order in which what looks like clutter and messiness turns out to have real imaginative content. Here, everything is touched by the wand of poetry, transforming itself into something new in the context of Neverland. By suspending the "real" laws of existence and of any interest at all in use-value or profit, Neverland gives us a symbolic order of true beauty with the added enchantments of play. (Tatar, "Introduction" xli)

Everything is open to the play of children's imagination. They often engage in role play and make-believe, which allows them to change their identities freely: Slightly has to play the doctor who treats Wendy after she has been shot (Barrie, *The Annotated* 83); Wendy plays the role of a mother to the lost boys throughout the story; and Peter plays a father figure.[23] In Neverland, children get the opportunity to experiment with their

[22] Compared to Native American tricksters, however, Peter's role of a culture hero is much smaller and remains rather in the symbolic realm.

[23] Peter is, however, the only one who cannot tell the difference between make-believe and reality: "The difference between him and the other boys at such a time was that they knew it was make-believe, while

identities, and the mercurial Peter often takes the lead in this venture. The narrator describes one episode which is "especially interesting as showing one of Peter's peculiarities, which was that in the middle of a fight he would suddenly change sides" (93). The story goes like this:

> At the gulch, when victory was still in the balance, sometimes leaning this way and sometimes that, he called out, "I'm redskin to-day; what are you, Tootles?" And Tootles answered, "Redskin; what are you, Nibs?" and Nibs said, "Redskin; what are you Twin?" and so on; and they were all redskin; and of course this would have ended the fight had not the real redskins, fascinated by Peter's methods, agreed to be lost boys for that once, and so at it they all went again, more fiercely than ever. (93)

This episode illustrates Peter's tricksterish capriciousness and openness to new experiences that he passes on others as well. And Neverland is the place where children can try everything out. There, they "inhabit a zone where play rules supreme" (Tatar, "Introduction" xxxix).

Moreover, Neverland is characterised by a certain degree of gender confusion, subverting the strict gender roles of Victorian England. This is apparent in the character of Hook: "In his dark nature there was a touch of the feminine, as in all the great pirates, and it sometimes gave him intuitions" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 102). Tatar comments on this and points out more examples: "Hook's curls, his dress, and his mannerisms all create the effeminate effects described here, reminding us that—despite the gendered division of labor—there is also frequent gender confusion in Neverland, with its sewing pirates and brave warrior princesses" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 102, note 10). In this regard, it is interesting to have a look at Peter. Tricksters are sometimes androgynous, being often able to change their sex. Peter is not able to change his sex, but he is not so

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to him make-believe and true were exactly the same thing" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 83). For Peter, there simply is no boundary between reality and imagination. He is the only one who is still mentally a child in this respect: "Peter is, after all, the boy who will not grow up, and knowing the difference between fantasy and reality serves as a critical milestone in the process of maturation" (83, note 7). But this also means that Peter is all the more free, not limited by the awareness of reality.

highly sexually differentiated either, which results from the fact that he is in fact a small boy. Although he tries to come across as masculine, possibly embracing and imitating the characteristics of the heroes of the stories he loves, the fact is that, on stage, he was mainly played by women, who were better suited to play a role of a small boy than men would be:

> It was assumed from the beginning that Peter would be played by a girl; until 1982 only twice in the play's history, in productions in France and Germany in the 1950s, was the part taken by a boy or young man. In fact in the first production and for some years afterwards, all the boys were played by girls or young women, with the exception of John Darling and Slightly, the Lost Boy who provides comic relief. (Carpenter 405)

Indeed, as a small boy, Peter still has a touch of the feminine in his appearance.

There is one more important fact about Neverland: it is a place with no memory. Indeed, Peter, as its principal inmate, has serious problems with remembering people or events in general. This actually supports his resistance to attachments of any kind because he forgets everything and has no time (or desire) to get to know someone better and form an attachment to them; he does not waste time reminiscing or reliving the past; he always lives in the present:

> That Peter has no memory and lives in an eternal present has been seen as the curse of living in Neverland. But because Neverland makes you forget everything, it also opens up worlds of possibilities and allows you to try out everything. In this sense, it begins to resemble Wonderland, for everything is new and arouses curiosity for the elated pilgrims wandering through it. Peter lives each moment to the fullest, reveling in the opportunities it offers and disregarding what was past and what the future holds. His identity remains unstable, for he can freely reinvent himself at any moment, even to the extent of turning into his own adversary. (Barrie, *The Annotated* 56, note 4)

If the trickster was to stop wandering and settle down (even though he would probably find the idea deeply disconcerting), Neverland would be the place to go to. Indeed, one can see how this place is the ideal nurturing ground for the trickster in Peter.

Some of the trickster features are actually qualities that are connected not only with Peter Pan, but also with the other children in the story and with child heroes in general. Tatar writes about "their deep appreciation of what it means to be alive. They all refuse to grow up and tarnish their sense of wonder and openness to new experiences" (Tatar, "Introduction" xxxv). Moreover, she points out the significance of *Peter Pan* in capturing the child's nature: "Few literary works capture more perfectly than *Peter Pan* a child's desire for mobility, lightness and flight. And it is rare to find expressed so openly and clearly the desire to remain a child forever, free of adult gravity and responsibility" (xxxv). It is here that the characteristics of children and tricksters overlap.

One of the reasons why the characteristics of children and tricksters overlap to a certain extent is the fact that the trickster is a representation of the child archetype in many respects, most importantly, however, in his function. According to C. G. Jung, the child is a mediator, a symbol that unites the opposites (Jung, *Archetypy* 243), just like the trickster. In his largely still preconscious state of mind, the child embodies a natural wholeness which gradually disappears with the increasing differentiation resulting from the emergence of consciousness that inevitably comes with the transition to adulthood (Kassel 249). That is why the child anticipates the figure that emerges from the synthesis of the conscious and unconscious parts of the psyche (Jung, *Archetypy* 243).

Peter Pan as a trickster and a child is a perfect representation of this archetype. His home is Neverland, the land of children's dreams, which could be associated with the unconscious because, in the dreams, our unconscious is revealed (Jung, *Archetypy* 229). This dreamy and unconscious aspect of Neverland is further supported by the fact that there is no memory, which is why Peter keeps forgetting everything. At the same time, however, Peter always comes in with a light, which actually emanates from Tinker

Bell, and the light is a symbol of consciousness: "[W]hile [Wendy] was dreaming the window of the nursery blew open, and a boy did drop on the floor. He was accompanied by a strange light, no bigger than your fist, which darted about the room like a living thing" (Barrie, *Peter Pan* 11). Finally, when Hook asks Peter about his identity, Peter compares himself to a newly hatched bird: "'Pan, who and what art thou?' he cried huskily. 'I'm youth, I'm joy,' Peter answered at a venture, 'I'm a little bird that has broken out of the egg.'"[24] (Barrie, *The Annotated* 163). In psychoanalysis, this could symbolise the birth of the self, which is the unity that emerges from the fusion of the conscious and unconscious elements of the psyche.

As noted earlier, Jung himself compared the trickster with the archetype of the shadow, which is the archetype that corresponds to the "uncivilised" features of the trickster, representing the traits that people normally try to suppress. However, the archetype of the child is more accurate when thinking about the trickster as the embodiment of paradox and his role as the ultimate mediator. Also, it captures the positive qualities the trickster has in common with children, such as openness to new experiences, spontaneity, creative energy and living in the now.

[24] Tatar's note here is especially relevant to Peter as trickster: "Peter's self-definition suggests both fragility and strength, combining the vulnerability of a newborn with the power to 'break through.' He refuses to categorize himself and avoids being defined by others" (Barrie, *The Annotated* 163, note 14). As trickster, and hence an enemy of borders, Peter refuses to be defined and restricted to only one identity.

Conclusion

The trickster is a tantalisingly elusive and fascinating phenomenon, which was why he has been the subject of countless studies. However, or rather because of that, no study, carried out so far, can claim to have fully grasped his identity, and none probably ever will. Tricksters will always change along with the cultures they are part of, constantly adapting to new situations, never standing still, never allowing to be fixed. From a Darwinian perspective, they are the ultimate survivors. However, if the trickster is suppressed and dies, the particular system dies with him. There would be no one to challenge it, and the system would be mired in stagnation. At the heart of every culture, there is a trickster: he is the one who pumps life into the system, connecting all the parts together.

The trickster is, indeed, an elusive figure, but the existing studies have managed to shed light on his nature, illustrating his incredible complexity and significance. As was already established, there is no precise definition of the trickster, but it is possible to identify his most common characteristics: deceiving and playing tricks on others is his most obvious feature. His tricks are very often based on imitation and shape-shifting, in so far that he shows a certain lack of identity and has a deeply ambiguous nature. This is connected with the fact that he is a homeless wanderer and thus not identified with one place or social group, which is supported by his resistance to emotional attachments. At the core of his personality is his opposition to boundaries: he is the ultimate boundary crosser and thus also mediator; he has an utter disrespect for rules or principles which is a sign of his amorality; and he makes no efforts to keep his physical appetites in check. Finally, he is a creative bricoleur, finding ingenious solutions based on the materials at hand. Not one of these is essential for identifying a figure as a trickster. Every trickster is different and unique, as are the cultures they

come from. Nevertheless, these traits are among the most common trickster features. One of the most important functions of the trickster is his challenge to the established system.

The analytical part of the thesis has shown that the whole myth of Peter Pan is deeply imbued with the trickster spirit. It is not just the character of Peter; even the author and the narrator show a considerable number of trickster characteristics: Barrie, a boy trapped in a man's body, bridged the gap between children and adults in literature; and the mercurial and capricious narrator constantly undermines the assumption that he is in charge of the characters and the story, creating the illusion that they have a life on their own and that nothing about the story is fixed.

Peter Pan, the focus of the thesis, shows a wide range of trickster features: he is a deft and creative imitator and a bricoleur, often finding a clever solution in a seemingly hopeless situation; he is a psychopomp, helping children who died cross the border between life and death; and he does not miss an opportunity to boast about his achievements which often makes him look utterly foolish. In several aspects though, Peter Pan departs from the idea of a typical trickster. These deviations, however, stem from the cultural specifics, specifically from the social context of Victorian England.

First of all, Peter is a child, which is why he is not dominated by his sexual appetites. Instead, the object of his greediness is listening to stories. He is extremely selfish and is able to risk lives of others for his own entertainment, but he is prepared to die to save the life of a lady. These two exceptions to his overall trickster character can be explained by his function. As a trickster, he challenges the established notions concerning children in Victorian England. By the fact that he shows no uninhibited physical appetites and by his chivalric behaviour, Peter subverts the Victorian idea of children as animals that have to be tamed and transformed into proper human beings.

At the same time, he also subverts the Victorian image of children, especially the ones who died, as innocent angels, serving as models of virtue for the corrupted adults. Indeed, Peter is a dead baby who is far from passing for a model of virtue. On the contrary, he is identified by the author himself as the villain of the story. What is more, selfishness and heartlessness are presented as inherent traits of all children. It is true that innocence is mentioned among these traits as well, but it sharply contrasts with the children's devious behaviour. The children are rather amoral than innocent, not seeing the wickedness of their behaviour.

The thesis demonstrated that Peter Pan is a fully fledged trickster figure, not only because of his personal traits, but also because of his role in challenging the assumptions about the child in Victorian England. Although he is technically a dead baby, with Neverland being something of an Otherworld, in British culture, he is very much alive, as the annual performances of the play and new adaptations of the story show. As was adumbrated at the very beginning of the thesis, the study of the trickster will never end; it is impossible to capture him on paper, impossible to capture him in his entire complexity. And so is the study of Peter Pan. His story will probably continue to be reshaped and adapted even though not by his original author. But then again, as was implied by both Barrie and the narrator, the characters and the story itself seem to be strangely independent and can manage even without their help.

Appendix

Fig. 1. Arthur Rackham, “Peter put his strange case before old Solomon Caw” (rpt. in Tatar, “Arthur” 256).

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